

ENVIRONMENT

Rain falls at peak of ice cap for first time on record

By Amy Walker

Rain has fallen at the highest peak of Greenland's ice cap for the first time on record, an occurrence that scientists say is a striking sign of the climate crisis.

US scientists witnessed rain falling at a 3,216m (10,551ft) peak but were unable to measure how much fell because rain was so unexpected.

Experts from the US National Science Foundation estimated that seven billion tonnes of water fell across all of Greenland in the downpour.

The rain fell during an abnormally hot spell in which temperatures were 18°C higher than average. The high temperatures caused melting across most of Greenland, an area about four times the size of the UK.

It was the heaviest rainfall on the ice sheet since records began in 1950, according to US scientists.

Ted Scambos, senior research scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Centre at the University of

Colorado, told CNN this is evidence Greenland is warming rapidly.

"What is going on is not simply a warm decade or two in a wandering climate pattern," he said. "This is unprecedented."

He added: "We are crossing thresholds not seen in millennia, and frankly this is not going to change until we adjust what we're doing to the air."

Only last month, the Greenland ice sheet lost 8.5 billion tons of surface mass in a single day, enough ice to cover Florida in two inches of water. It was the third extreme melting event in the past decade.

Analysis of satellite data also revealed that the ice sheet melted more in 2019 than during any other year on record, losing a total of 532 gigatonnes of its mass.

Another study by the University of Leeds revealed that a record-breaking 28 trillion tonnes of ice – enough to cover the whole of the UK in a sheet over 300ft thick – melted from the Earth between 1994 and 2017.

