SNOW COVER ATLAS OF THE GANGA BASIN

Sub-basins: Alaknanda, Bhagirathi, and Yamuna

(Integrated Studies of Himalayan Cryosphere

A Project of Indian Space Research Organisation)

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Abstract	This atlas gives sub-basin-wise distribution of snow cover in the Ganga basin from October 2015 to June 2016. The sub-basins included in this report are Alaknanda, Bhagirathi and Yamuna. The areal extent of snow cover was estimated in fully automatic mode using Normalized Difference Snow Index (NDSI) based algorithm. For this purpose, AWiFS sensor of Resourcesat satellite was used. This atlas gives snow cover products, statistics and seasonal snow depletion curve. It is expected that this data will be useful for hydrological and climatological applications.
Key words	Snow cover, NDSI, AWiFS, depletion curve, Alaknanda, Bhagirathi and Yamuna basins.
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1. Introduction

Snow covers almost 40 per cent of the Earth's land surface during Northern Hemisphere winter. This makes albedo and areal extent of snow as important component of the Earth's radiation balance (Foster and Chang, 1993). In addition, large areas in the Himalayas are also covered by snow during winter. Area of snow can change significantly during winter and spring. This can affect stream flow for rivers originating in the higher Himalayas. All the rivers originating from higher Himalayas receive almost 30-50 % of annual flow from snow and glacier melt run off (Agarwal et al., 1983). In addition, snow pack ablation is highly sensitive to climatic variation. Increase in atmospheric temperature can influence snowmelt and stream runoff pattern (Kulkarni et al., 2002). Therefore, mapping of the areal extent and reflectance of snow are important parameter for various climatological and hydrological applications. In addition, extent of snow cover can also be used as input for numerous other applications.

Mapping and monitoring of seasonal snow cover using field methods are normally very difficult in a mountainous terrain, like the Himalayas. Therefore, remote sensing techniques have been extensively used for snow cover monitoring. Snow cover monitoring using satellite images were started by using the TIROS-1 satellite from April 1960 (Singer and Popham 1963). Since then, the potential for operational satellite-based mapping has been enhanced by the development of higher temporal frequency and satellite sensors with higher spatial resolution. In addition, satellites with better radiometric resolutions, such as NOAA have been used successfully for snow mapping (Hall et al., 1995). This is possibly due to the distinct spectral reflectance characteristics of snow in visible and near infrared regions. India has launched series of Indian Remote Sensing satellite (IRS) to study the different earth resources. Previously launched satellites have flown with many sensors having different spatial, temporal and spectral resolutions. Recently launched RESOURCESAT-1 satellite has three different sensors namely LISS III, LISS IV & AWiFS with different spatial, temporal and spectral resolutions as desired for different applications. AWiFS (Advanced Wide Field Sensor) is an advanced version of earlier Indian satellite sensor WiFS (Wide Field Sensor) with improved spectral and spatial resolutions maintaining the same repetivity. There are a series of other polar orbiting satellites, like Landsat, NOAA and MODIS etc., which have provided information on different aspects of snow. Geo-stationary satellites also proved their utility in mapping/monitoring the snow-covered regions. Information generated from satellite observations has been extensively used for snowmelt runoff modeling (Kulkarni et al., 1997).

2. Study Area:

This Atlas gives distribution of snow cover in three sub-basins of the Ganga basin. These are Alaknanda, Bhagirathi and Yamuna sub basins. Locations of these basins are shown in Figure 1.

3. Data used:

AWiFS data from October 2015 to June 2016 were used in this study.

4. Normalised Difference Snow Index (NDSI):

In general, the reflectance of snow is high at the red end of the visible spectrum. It tends to decline in the near-infrared region until 1090 nm, where slight gain in reflectance occurs and gives a minor peak at approximately 1090 to 1100 nm. One of the important difficulties in snow cover monitoring is the presence of cloud cover. Cloud has strong reflectivity in visible, NIR and SWIR regions while snow absorbs in SWIR, and this difference can be utilized for snow/cloud discrimination. Normalized Difference Snow Index (NDSI) utilize the normalized ratio of green and SWIR and is used as an automated approach for snow mapping addressing the shadow and cloud problems in snow bound areas.

Normalized Difference Snow Index was calculated using the ratio of green wavelength (band 2) and SWIR (band 5) of AWiFS sensor:

$$Normalized Difference SnowIndex(NDSI) = (band2 - band5)/(band2 + band5)$$
 ..(1)

To estimate NDSI, DN numbers were converted into reflectance. This involves conversion of digital numbers into the radiance values, known as sensor calibration, and then estimation of

reflectance from these radiance values. Various parameters needed for estimating spectral reflectance are maximum and minimum radiances and mean solar exo-atmospheric spectral irradiances in the satellite sensor bands, satellite data acquisition time, solar declination, solar zenith and solar azimuth angles, mean Earth-Sun distance etc. (Markham and Barker, 1987; Srinivasulu and Kulkarni, 2004).

5. Snow cover monitoring algorithm

An algorithm is developed to provide changes in the areal extent of snow (Kulkarni et. al., 2006). Snow extent is estimated at an interval of 5-days and 10-days, depending upon availabilities of AWiFS data. In 5-daily product, snow extent is generated scene-wise. In this product, snow and cloud extents are given. Estimate of cloud is important because, at times, snow is covered by cloud and this may be classified as non-snow area, leading to erroneous conclusions. In 10-daily product, three scenes are analyzed, if available. For example, 10 March product data of 5, 10 and 15 March was used. If any pixel is identified as snow on any one date then this pixel will be classified as snow on final product. This provides snow cover at an interval of 10 days, an important requirement in hydrological applications. Therefore, this product is generated basinwise. Since this product is using three scenes, probability becomes high that at least in one scene, pixel may be cloud-free and this helps in overcoming problem associated with snow under cloud cover. If three consecutive scenes are not available, then all available scenes in 10 days window was used in the analysis. Differentiation between water and snow is difficult using NDSI image. In addition, separation of snow and water pixels is also difficult based on reflectance due to mountain shadow. Therefore, in the present algorithm, water bodies are marked in pre-winter season and are masked in the final products during winter. Flow diagram of the algorithm is given in Figure 2.

6. Results and discussions

In this atlas, basin-wise snow cover statistics, maps, and seasonal depletion curves have been provided from October 2015 to June 2016. Snow ablation pattern varies from basin to basin, depending on area altitude distribution in the basins. From October to December there was not much snow fall was observed, accumulation starts from November and melting was observed from till first week of December in all the three sub-basins. Again accumulation starts from mid of January till March end. Maximum snow cover was observed in the month of February in all the three sub-basins. Yamuna sub-basin ablation starts in early March. Fluctuation in snow cover was more in Yamuna sub-basin. It may be due to lower altitude.

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Figure 1: Location map of Alaknanda, Bhagirathi and Yamuna sub-basins (Part of Ganga basin)

ALAKNANDA SUB-BASIN

AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (5 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: ALAKNANDA

BASIN AREA: 11090 sq km

S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)		
October 2015									
1	04-Oct-2015	1035 (C)	9						
November 2015									
2	02-Nov-2015	1405(C)	13	3	07-Nov-2015	2094	19		
December 2015									
4	01-Dec-2015	1630	15	7	13-Dec-2015	3707	33		
5	05-Dec-2015	1335	12	8	20-Dec-2015	3278	30		
6	10-Dec-2015	1352(C)	12	9					
January 2016									
10	13-Jan-2016	2425 (C)	22	11	27-Jan-2016	2913 (C)	26		
February 2016									
12	01-Feb-2016	3783	34	14	08-Feb-2016	6072	55		
13	03-Feb-2016	3161	29	15	27-Feb-2016	3953 (C)	36		
			Marcl	n 2016					
16	01-Mar-2016	4045	36	18	22-Mar-2016	4963	45		
17	03-Mar-2016	3785	34						
	·		April	2016	·				
19	03-April-2016	4027	36	22	23-April-2016	3942 (C)	36		
20	13-April-2016	3893	35	23	27-April-2016	2530 (C)	23		
21	20-April-2016	3513 (C)	32	24	30-April-2016	3340	30		
May 2016									
25	02-May-2016	3173	29	27	31-May-2016	1755 (C)	16		
26	19-May-2016	1707 (C)	15		_				
June 2016									
28	05-June-2016	1220 (C)	11	30	24-June-2016	760 (C)	7		
29	19-June-2016	748 (C)	7	31	29-June-2016	821	7		

AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (10 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: ALAKNANDA

BASIN AREA: 11090 sq km

S. No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)		
October 2015									
November 2015									
1	05-Nov-2015	2095	19						
December 2015									
2	05-Dec-2015	1631	15	3	15-Dec-2015	3706	33		
January 2016									
4	05-Jan-2016	2266	20	5	25-Jan-2016	3770	34		
	15-Jan-2016	2464	22						
			Februa	ry 2016					
6	05-Feb-2016	5998	54	7	25-Feb-2016	4710	42		
March 2016									
8	05-Mar-2016	4254	38	9	25-Mar-2016	4963	45		
April 2016									
10	5-Apr-2016	4249	38	12	25-Apr-2016	4002	36		
11	15-Apr-2016	3893	35						
May 2016									
13	05-May-16	3175	29	15	25-May-16	2661	24		
14	15-May-16	3195	29						
June 2016									
16	05-June-16	1659	15	18	25-June-2016	1339	12		
17	15-June-16	1429	13						

SNOW COVER DEPLETION CURVE





SNOW COVER DEPLETION CURVE



SNOW COVER MAP



































BHAGIRATHI SUB-BASIN
AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (5 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: BHAGIRATHI

BASIN AREA: 7438 sq km

S No	Date	Snow cover	Snow cover	S No	Date	Snow cover	Snow cover		
October 2015									
1	04-Oct-15	1011	14	2	30-Oct-15	1114	15		
November 2015									
3	02-Nov-15	971	13	5	07-Nov-15	1073	14		
4	06-Nov-15	1548	21						
			Decemb	er 2015					
6	01-Dec-15	1111	15	9	13-Dec-15	2650	36		
7	05-Dec-15	843	11	10	20-Dec-15	2085	28		
8	10-Dec-15	1259 (c)	17						
	1	I	Januar	ry 2016	Γ		Γ		
11	03-Jan-16	1473	20	13	13-Jan-16	1482 (c)	20		
12	06-Jan-16	1918	26	14	27-Jan-16	1819 (c)	24		
	1	1	Februa	ry 2016	Γ	1			
15	01-Feb-16	2688	36	18	10-Feb-16	2938 (c)	39		
16	03-Feb-16	2130	29	19	27-Feb-16	2740	37		
17	08-Feb-16	4691	63						
	1	1	Marcl	n 2016		1			
20	01-Mar-16	2718	37	22	22-Mar-16	3696	50		
21	03-Mar-16	2456	33						
	T	T	April	2016	1	1	1		
23	03-Apr-16	3025	41	26	23-Apr-16	2963	40		
24	13-Apr-16	3053	41	27	27-Apr-16	2368	32		
25	20-Apr-16	2922	39	28	30-Apr-16	2598	35		
	May 2016								
29	02-May-16	2492	34	31	19-May-16	1418 (c)	19		
30	17-May-16	1742	23	32	31-May-16	1224	16		

June 2016								
33	05-Jun-16	886	12	37	19-Jun-16	541 (c)	7	
34	09-Jun-16	576 (c)	8	38	24-Jun-16	622	8	
35	10-Jun-16	702 (c)	9	39	29-Jun-16	502 (c)	7	
36	14-Jun-16	934 (c)	13					

AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (10 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: BHAGIRATHI

BASIN AREA: 7438 sq km

S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	
October 2015			November 2015					
1	05-Oct-15	1223	16	3	05-Nov-15	1072	14	
2	15-Oct-15	1227	16					
	Decer	mber 2015			Janu	ary 2016		
4	05-Dec-15	1080	15	7	05-Jan-16	1919	26	
5	15-Dec-15	2622	35	8	15-Jan-16	1583	21	
6	25-Dec-15				25-Jan-16	1814	24	
February 2016				March 2016				
9	05-Feb-16	4647	62	10	05-Mar-16	2703	36	
11	25-Feb-16	2818	38	12	25-Mar-16	3684	50	
	Ар	oril 2016		May 2016				
13	05-Apr-16	3020	41	16	05-May-16	2486	33	
14	15-Apr-16	3043	41	17	15-May-16	2328	31	
15	25-Apr-16	2995	40	18	25-May-16	1209	16	
June 2016								
19	05-Jun-2016	904	12					
20	15-Jun-2016	906	12					
21	25-Jun-2016	1363	18					







SNOW COVER MAP





































YAMUNA SUB-BASIN

AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (5 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: YAMUNA

BASIN AREA: 3527 sq km

S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)		
October 2015									
1	04-Oct-2015	249 (c)	7	3	30-Oct-2015	240	7		
2	28-Oct-2015	214 (c)	6						
	November 2015								
4	01-Nov-2015	213	6	13	06-Nov-2015	569	16		
5	02-Nov-2015	201	7	14	07-Nov-2015	424	12		
	F		Decemb	er 2015					
8	01-Dec-2015	663	19	11	10-Dec-2015	276 (c)	8		
9	05-Dec-2015	427	12	12	13-Dec-2015	1483	42		
10	07-Dec-2015	355	10	13	20-Dec-2015	1041	30		
	January 2016								
14	03-Jan-16	803	23	16	13-Jan-16	688 (c)	20		
15	06-Jan-16	794 (c)	23	17	27-Jan-16	763 (c)	22		
		1	Februa	ry 2016		l			
18	01-Feb-16	1291	37	21	10-Feb-16	1316 (c)	37		
19	03-Feb-16	1154	33	22	17-Feb-16	1285	36		
20	08-Feb-16	2958	84	23	27-Feb-16	1020	29		
			Marcl	n 2016					
24	01-March-16	1067	30	26	22-March-16	1346	38		
25	03-March-16	942	27						
	1	1	April	2016	1				
27	03-April-16	950	27	30	23-April-16	823 (c)	23		
28	13-April-16	991	28	31	27-April-16	550 (c)	16		
29	20-April-16	888	25	32	30-April-16	768	22		
	1		May	2016	1				
33	02-May-16	694	20	35	19-May-16	456 (c)	13		
34	17-May-16	511	14	36	31-May-16	480	14		

June 2016								
37	04-June-16	347 (c)	10	41	14-June-16	219	6	
38	05-June-16	275 (c)	8	42	19-June-16	172 (c)	5	
39	09-June-16	391 (c)	11	43	24-June-16	194	6	
40	10-June-16	228 (c)	6	44	29-June-16	370 (c)	10	

AREAL EXTENT OF SNOW (10 DAILY)

BASIN NAME: YAMUNA

BASIN AREA: 3527 sq km

S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)	S No	Date	Snow cover (sq km)	Snow cover (%)		
October 2015									
1	5-Oct-15	293	8	2	25-Oct-15	241	7		
	November 2015								
3	5-Nov-15	570	16						
	December 2015								
4	5-Dec-15	662	19	5	15-Dec-15	1485	42		
	January 2016								
6	5-Jan-16	803	23	7	15-Jan-16	689	20		
	F		Februa	ry 2016	r	1			
8	05-Feb-16	2958	84	10	25-Feb-16	1020	29		
9	15-Feb-16	1286	36						
	1	1	Marcl	n 2016	1	1			
11	5-March-16	1067	30	12	25-March-16	1346	38		
	1	1	April	2016	1	1			
13	5-April-16	949	27	15	25-April-16	768	22		
14	15-April-16	991	28						
May 2016									
16	5-May-16	712	20	18	25-May-16	480	14		
17	15-May-16	653	19						
			June	2016					
19	5-June-16	460	13	21	25-June-16	194	6		
20	15-June-16	391	11						







SNOW COVER MAP


































