

Global Climate Change is among the greatest threats to biodiversity today

What is Global Warming?

The Earth as an ecosystem is changing, attributable in great part to the effects of globalization and man. More carbon dioxide is now in the atmosphere than has been in the past 650,000 years. This carbon stays in the atmosphere, acts like a warm blanket, and holds in the heat—hence the name ‘global warming.’

What are the effects of Global Warming?

- **Environmental Destruction:** The massive ice sheets in the Arctic are melting at alarming rates. This is causing the oceans to rise (that’s how big these ice sheets are!) Most of the world’s population lives on or near the coasts. Rising ocean levels, an estimated six feet over the next 100 years or sooner, will cause massive devastation and economic catastrophe to population centers worldwide.
- **Health Risks:** Malaria, Dengue Fever, Encephalitis, these names are not usually heard in emergency rooms and doctors’ offices in the United States. But if we don’t act to curb global warming, they will be. As temperatures rise, disease-carrying mosquitoes and rodents spread, infecting people in their wake. Doctors at the Harvard Medical School have linked recent U.S. outbreaks of dengue fever, malaria, hantavirus and other diseases directly to climate change.
- **Catastrophic Weather:** Super powerful hurricanes, fueled by warmer ocean temperatures are the “smoking gun” of global warming. Since 1970, the number of category 4 and 5 events has jumped sharply. Human activities are adding an alarming amount of pollution to the earth’s atmosphere causing catastrophic shifts in weather patterns. These shifts are causing severe heat, floods and worse.

As Earth's temperature rises, wildlife moves to more suitable habitat northward or perhaps to higher elevations. Some coral reef species cannot move, other species are not suited to new ecosystems, and some are simply running out of room to live. Meanwhile, glaciers are melting, ocean chemistry is changing, and entire populations of species are disappearing.

It is well known that human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels, causes global warming

However, few people realize that deforestation and land-use changes (such as slash-and-burn farming, soil degradation and loss, road building, and urban sprawl) account for as much as 25 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions

The United States, with only four percent of the world’s population, is responsible for 22% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions

A rapid transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will combat global warming, protect human health, create new jobs, protect habitat and wildlife, and ensure a secure, affordable energy future

If left unchecked, climate change could prompt the extinction of tens of thousands of species in as few as 50 years!

