

A Warming Planet

By Evelyn Skerritt

Global warming is the term that we use to talk about the recent average increase in the temperature of our planet. Sometimes people also call it climate change. Climate change can also refer to global cooling, so if you're talking about what is going on today on planet earth, global warming is a more specific term to use.

What causes global warming? To start with, do you know about the **greenhouse effect**? The greenhouse effect describes how some gases in the atmosphere trap heat in, instead of letting it escape into space. This happens naturally and keeps the planet warm. Without it humans wouldn't be able to live on the earth because it would be too cold for us to survive. But if there are extra **greenhouse gases** in the atmosphere, it keeps getting hotter! And that is exactly what global warming is.

How do the extra greenhouse gases get into the atmosphere? We put them there! Yep, that's right - we are causing global warming. When we burn **fossil fuels**, they release CO₂. Although there are many different greenhouse gases, we believe that very high levels of CO₂ are what is causing global warming. And we use lots of energy and power each day - that's a lot more CO₂ being released!



Mercury Rising

By Wilhemina Agbemakplido

Ever since the early 1990's, lots of scientist have been talking about global warming. And nowadays it seems that everywhere you turn, people like you and me are talking about it. **Geologists**, people who study the history of the earth by studying rocks and soil formation, and other scientists have determined that the globe has warmed and cooled for millions of years. These increases and decreases occur over about thousands of years. So, why all the big commotion? Isn't this natural? Well, ever since human beings started burning fossil fuels, scientists have been noticing the increase in the earth's average temperature. Over the past fifty years or more, the effects have become more clearly defined. The increase in the average temperature of the earth *this time* is happening much faster than before and therefore is a reason for alarm.



Think back to when you were in the second grade; can you remember how many snow days we had then? Compared to today, can you count on both fingers how many snow days we had this winter? Notice any differences? Probably, every winter was different. But when we have one year with heavy snowfall and another year with little or no snowfall, it does not mean that global warming is getting worse. The **average** temperature increase can only be measured looking at a whole series of years together.

You cannot talk about global warming without going through its effects. You will find in this issue an article by Emily Tran stating the effects of global warming. The most important thing to remember when you are talking about the **trend** of global warming is that it is our use of fossil fuels like coal and oil that resulting in the presence of extra greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. And this is what is causing a natural thing like the average decrease and increase of the earth's temperature to become unnaturally rapid and strong.

The Latest, Hottest Environmental Gossip

By Emily Tran

I had the special opportunity recently to interview Betty the Bear from Spain. In this exclusive interview, Betty talks about shortening hibernation periods, how it affects her and her friends, and possible solutions.



Emily: Hi Betty! Thanks for meeting with me on this strangely warm January day!

What brings you to Boston?

Betty: Why, yes it is warm! That is the exact reason I felt the need to travel the world and tell people about climate change and how it affects my friends and me.

Emily: So what is this climate change thing?

Betty: Do you know what global warming is? It has been getting warmer and warmer every winter in Spain, and as a result, the time I spend napping during the winter is becoming shorter and shorter.

Emily: That's crazy! Why is it shortening?

Betty: Well, let me give you some background information. I take a long nap during the winter because the foods that I eat, like nuts and berries, are difficult to find during cold weather. This year, because the nuts and berries have been available almost all year round, I don't have to nap for very long.

Emily: I don't get it, Betty. Why do people make climate change sound so bad? I get to

play outside without a jacket, and you can find food! What's the problem?

Betty: That's a good question. Sure, it appears on the surface to be something good, but you and I can easily adapt to the changing temperature. I have friends who can't do that, and they are being negatively affected.

Emily: Oh no! Such as who?

Betty: My friends, Tanya the Sea Turtle, and Glen, the Golden Toad, are affected by this. Tanya recently lost her nesting beach because of the rising of the sea level and beach erosion. Every summer, Tanya lays her eggs in the sand on one specific beach where she was born. However, this summer, when she went back, the rising sea levels destroyed the part of the beach. The more beaches lost mean the more eggs that never hatch. Sea turtles face many other dangers too, and sooner than you think, sea turtles will be gone forever!

Emily: What about Glen, what happened to him?

Betty: Glen, the Golden Toad, was a good friend of mine. In 2004, Glen and all his Golden Toad friends became **extinct**! There are many theories as to why Glen and his friends have become extinct, but global warming is one of them! A couple of degree changes may seem like a small deal to you and me, but it means life or death to Glen and other animals who are extremely sensitive to temperature.

Emily: Isn't there anything we can we do about this?

Betty: The first step is becoming aware of what's happening. There are simple things you can do to help my friends and me, such as turning off lights when you're not using it, or even unplugging your video game. Little things add up if we all work together!