

Protecting Our Earth

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Saving the Rain Forests



Tim Flach/Getty Images

The red-eyed tree frog lives in the rain forest.

Tropical rain forests are in danger. For years, people have been cutting down trees to make room for farms and roads. Many plants and animals are in danger of becoming **extinct**, or completely gone.

"When rain forests are cut down, animals lose their homes," says Kerry Zobor. She works at the World Wildlife Fund. "More carbon dioxide fills the air. Scientists think that makes Earth get warmer. If it gets too hot, it could cause many animals to go extinct."

The World Wildlife Fund is a group working to protect animals and **habitats**. A habitat is a place in nature where an animal or a plant lives. "We are working every day to help save rain forests around the world," says Zobor.



Brent Stirton/Getty Images

A large area of this rain forest has been destroyed.

Clean Energy

Power From the Sun and Wind

Learn about Earth-friendly energy

What do people need to light their homes and drive cars? Energy! It gives power to many things we need and use.

Most of the energy people use comes from coal, oil, and gas. They are called fossil fuels. Those fuels come from fossils under the ground. Fossils are the remains of plants and animals that lived long ago.

Burning fossil fuels pollutes the air. The air becomes dirty. That can be harmful to people, animals, and plants.

Now more people are using clean energy. Such energy does not pollute the air. Two kinds of clean energy are wind power and solar power. *Solar* means "from the sun."

Solar Power



Construction Photography/Corbis

The sun gives Earth heat and light. Some homes have solar panels on the roof. The panels collect sunlight and turn it into **electricity**. That is a kind of energy. It lets people do many things. For example, we use electricity to light our homes and watch television. Solar power can also be used to warm up the water in our homes.



WENN/Newscom

The Antro Solo is a solar-powered car.

Wind Power

People can turn wind energy into electricity. Wind turbines are machines that spin when the wind blows. They make electricity.

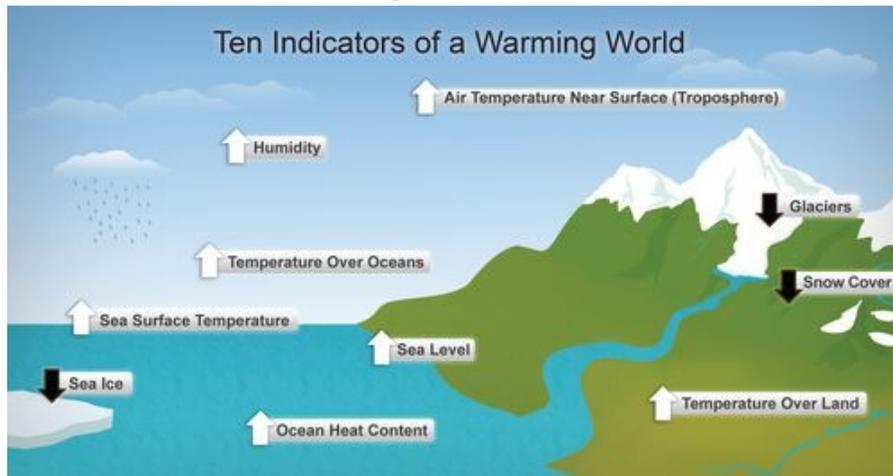


Raimund Koch/Corbis

Wind turbines are often as tall as 20-story buildings. The blades can be more than 100 feet long.

Wind turbines are grouped together in wind farms. Some wind farms have hundreds of wind turbines. The Roscoe Wind Farm in Texas has 627 turbines. They can power 230,000 homes.

Watching the Weather



Do you know what the weather will be tomorrow? A weather report can tell you. But what will the weather be like in ten years? Or 20 years? Or 100 years?

No one knows for sure. But some scientists say that our long-range weather outlook isn't good.

Those scientists say the summers will be hotter. They say that warmer, wetter winters are on the way. Severe droughts, floods, wildfires, and storms are also possible.

What's the cause of all those wacky weather changes? Experts say that humans are.

Warming the Globe

Some weather changes are due to global warming. Global warming happens when gases in the air trap the sun's energy. That energy heats Earth. Without the gases, the energy would escape into space.

Some global warming is good. Without it, Earth would be too cold to live on.

For years, though, humans have created lots of air pollution. The pollution traps more of the sun's heat. In turn, Earth has grown warmer, experts say. This could lead to bad weather.

Melting the Ice

There are some signs of global warming. One of the signs is happening in the coldest parts of the world.

Near the North and South poles, vast ice sheets are breaking up.

Earth's glaciers (GLAY-shers) are also melting. A glacier is a huge mass of ice that slowly moves. Experts say some glaciers may vanish by the year 2100.

A Rising Tide

As the ice melts, ocean levels rise. Experts say that levels have risen 4 to 10 inches in the past 100 years. Levels could rise 3 feet in the next 100 years!

High ocean levels might lead to floods along U.S. coasts. Some coastal areas might disappear under water.

That change might also bring more storms. Hurricanes are storms that create high wind and rainfall. They are strongest over water. Higher sea levels might lead to stronger hurricanes on U.S. shores.

Drying Out

In some areas, though, global warming might lead to drier weather. Dry weather often leads to droughts. A drought is a long period of very dry weather.

Droughts hit parts of the country this year. If experts are right, global warming could cause less rain to fall in the Midwest. This would be hard on plant life and people.

Droughts kill off crops. And dried-out plants and trees could lead to wildfires.

What's the Answer?

Scientists say that cutting down on air pollution will slow global warming. One way to lower air pollution is to drive less. Cars cause a lot of pollution. People also need to find cleaner ways to make electricity.

Experts aren't sure how global warming will change the weather. But they agree that something must be done to stop global warming. The life of future generations depends on it.

Earth Helpers



Take Care of Earth. People work together to help our planet.

April 22 is Earth Day! That day reminds people to take care of our planet. Many kids and adults will take part in the Great American Cleanup. It is held each year from March 1 to May 31.

Weekly Reader spoke with Gail Cunningham. She is in charge of the Great American Cleanup. She says, "People should get into the habit of taking care of Earth all year long." Here are some ways people can help.

Clean Up Litter

People will clean up beaches and parks this year. They will pick up **litter**, or trash. Animals can mistake litter for food and choke on it. In 2014, volunteers for the Great American Cleanup collected more than 37 million pounds of litter and debris.

Plant a Tree

Many people will plant trees. Volunteers planted more than 41,000 trees in 2014. Trees are very important. They help clean the air. They also give off a gas called **oxygen**. People and animals need oxygen to live.

Recycle

People will **recycle** paper, bottles, and cans. When something is recycled, it is made into something new. Volunteers collected more than 250 million pounds of items to be used for recycling or reusing in 2014. Many of these items were bottles, which a company used to make backpacks for kids.

A few years ago, the bottles were made into fleece jackets. Those jackets were given to kids who didn't have enough warm clothing. "It is wonderful to turn plastic bottles into something fantastic," says Cunningham.

Trouble in the Ocean

Save the Ocean Animals

Some sea creatures need help.

Many kinds of animals live in the ocean. Some of those animals are endangered. That means they are in danger of dying out. Only a few are left in the world. Scientists are trying to keep endangered animals safe.

Green Sea Turtle



Pacific Stock/SuperStock

The green sea turtle lives in warm waters. An adult green sea turtle eats mostly plants. It can weigh up to 440 pounds. Its shell can grow to 4 feet long. A green sea turtle can't pull its head into its shell the way some turtles can.

Why are green sea turtles endangered? People hunt them for their meat and eggs. The turtles also get trapped in nets used to catch fish. Pollution hurts the turtles too. If turtles eat trash, it can kill them.

Blue Whale



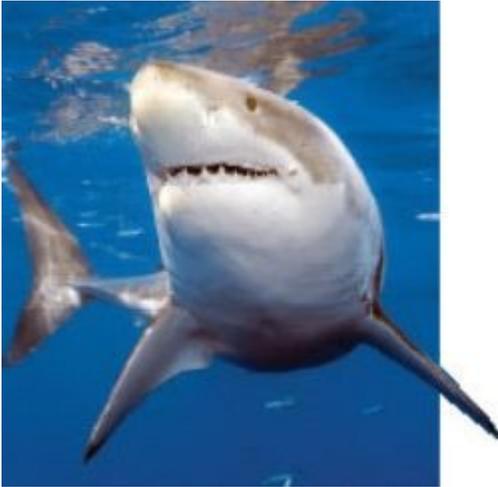
Denis Scott/Corbis

The blue whale is the largest animal in the world. It is as big as an airplane. The whale can grow to 90 feet long and weigh more than 100 **tons**. A ton is equal to 2,000 pounds.

The blue whale lives in all the oceans. It eats tiny animals called krill. A blue whale can eat about 4 tons of krill each day.

Blue whales are endangered. People once hunted them for their meat and fat. The fat was used to make oil for lamps. Special laws now protect blue whales. People no longer hunt them.

Great White Shark



Stephen Frink/Science Faction/Corbis

The great white shark is the largest meat-eating shark. It grows to about 15 feet long. It weighs up to 5,000 pounds. The shark has rows of long, sharp teeth. It eats fish, dolphins, seals, and other ocean animals.

Great white sharks are often found in waters near the coast. A coast is land next to the ocean.

People are a threat to great white sharks. People hunt them for their teeth, jaws, and meat. The sharks also get caught in fishing nets.

Take Care of Our Planet

Keep Earth Clean. You can help solve the trash problem.

Our trash is piling up. Each American throws away an average of about 4½ pounds every day. That adds up to more than 1,600 pounds of trash per person every year!

The trash includes bottles, cans, boxes, paper, tires, and much more. Much of it ends up in **landfills**. Those are places where people dump trash.

April 22 is Earth Day. The day reminds people to take care of the earth. People can help by following the three Rs—reduce, reuse, and recycle.



Britt Erianson/Getty Images

Many types of plastics can be recycled.

Reduce

You can **reduce** the amount of trash you throw away. *Reduce* means "to make less." Here are some ways to make less trash:



FoodPix/Jupiter Images

- Use less paper by writing on both sides of each sheet.
- Instead of throwing out old toys or clothes, sell or donate them.
- If you buy something, don't ask for a paper or plastic bag. Instead bring your own cloth bag.

Recycle

You can **recycle**. When something is recycled, it is made into something new. Here are some items that can be taken to a recycling center.



Image Source/Getty Images

- cardboard
- aluminum cans
- paper
- certain plastics
- glass bottles
- newspaper

Reuse

You can try to **reuse** things before you throw them in the trash. *Reuse* means "to use again." Here are some examples:



Alistair Berg/Getty Images

- Use an old T-shirt as a dust cloth.
- After opening a gift, save the wrapping paper and use it again.
- Make an art project using odds and ends such as string, bottle caps, and scraps of paper.