



Climate Change

What does it mean, how does it affect us and what can we do to avoid it?

It has now been accepted beyond any doubt that human activity on the planet Earth has accelerated a warming trend in the Earth's atmosphere. According to present scientific data, this **'Global Warming'** could increase the mean average temperature by as much as 6 degrees Celsius during the next eighty to a hundred years, causing catastrophic climatic changes to occur.

Throughout the history of our planet, there have been constant changes in climate, which have happened over thousands or even millions of years, and have therefore allowed both animals and plants plenty of time to adapt. The changes that are expected during the 21st century, however, will be so rapid that **many species will be lost**, being unable to cope with the radical fluctuations in their living conditions.

The most obvious effect of a significant increase in temperature is the melting of the polar ice caps and the subsequent rise in sea level, which will cause **devastating floods world-wide**, and a great loss of life and land. Additionally, as the sea ice, glaciers and ice fields decline, exposing more ocean surface, rocks, trees and other vegetation, this will lead to the absorption of even more heat from the sun. Warmer oceans absorb less carbon dioxide and melting 'tundra' regions will release vast quantities of methane gas, further increasing **the 'greenhouse effect'**. A state may be reached when the warming of the earth's atmosphere simply goes **'out of control'**, as temperatures rise exponentially in an upward spiral.

By now, most of us are aware that **air pollution from factories, power stations and motor cars**, together with the burning of forests, are the main causes of **'Global Warming'**. It will be interesting to see how many of us are ready and willing to do something positive and avoid that worse case scenario, even though it poses **the single greatest threat to our future existence on the planet**.

Believe it or not, **the solutions are not so complicated** or impossible to apply to our daily lives. It's all about using less of everything, saving energy, buying organic locally produced food, recycling our waste, reducing travel, planting trees, investing in ethical businesses and lobbying politicians to **act before it really is too late**.

Greenheart