

POLAR REGIONS

No places are more remote than the Arctic and the Antarctic, but their remoteness has not kept them isolated from the environmental issues that trouble other parts of the world. Pollutants released in developed lands travel on air and water currents into the polar regions. As a result, scientists have found that polar bears are contaminated with poisons, the ozone hole has widened over Antarctica, and global warming is causing its greatest damage in the world's iciest locales. As they have increased their understanding of how human activities are changing the polar regions, researchers have come to appreciate the polar regions' importance in global climate, biological productivity, and biodiversity. Many scientists see the Arctic and Antarctic as the "canaries in the coal mine" that offer a forewarning of the changes that will come to the entire planet if society continues on its current trajectory.

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OUR FRAGILE PLANET uses science to celebrate the wonders of the natural world and to understand the tremendous impact people are having on it. Today, resources are being overexploited; natural landscapes are being altered for human uses; pollution is contaminating the air, water, and soil; and global temperatures are rising. Science is the solid ground from which we can see how human activities are disrupting natural processes and the tool with which we can design methods to help ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

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