The Catastrophic Effects of Global Warming

The outcomes of global warming and the reasons, which have caused or are causing it, as well as the phenomenon itself, have been a subject for discussion lately. Global warming is debated very heavily all over the world, and some scientists tend to believe that it is a natural process, and humans have little, if any, effect upon it. Others tend to believe, the process is entirely caused by the human technological activities. Some scientists think that outcomes of global warming will not cause any danger to humankind (and other living species inhabiting our planet) while others tend to believe that the results of the phenomenon are substantial to the point, they may cause outstanding danger to the humankind, in the nearest future. It is impossible to find the truth within such a short paper; however, there are some figures which will be addressed, and some conclusions will be made. Here are some of the figures and facts, stated in scientific literature on the subject.

7 billion metric tons: this is the amount of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases released into the air each year (Horn) through the emissions from automobiles, industry, and other sources (Eilperin). As a result of these high emissions, the sun’s heat is being trapped in the earth’s atmosphere, and our planet is experiencing what scientist term as “global warming.” Global warming is “not a theory, it’s a fact” (Horn121), and it must be taken seriously. Our planet’s warming climate is producing catastrophic effects on animals, plants, and humans.
In 2007, the Panel on Climate Change issued a report that stated, river and stream temperatures are significantly increasing, and, as a result, “20 to 30 of the world’s species are…at risk of irreversible extinction” (Aileron). Polar bears are among the species that risk extinction due to global warming. Ice provides a “platform” (Alder p. 45) for polar bears to hunt for their main food source (seals), and as the ice melts, polar bears are unable to catch seals. In addition, as ice declines and more open water appears, polar bear cubs are drowning and scientists are witnessing cases of “cannibalism and starvation among polar bears--things they have rarely seen before” (Alder 45). Furthermore, the U.S. Geological Survey concludes that if sea ice continues to disappear due to the climate change trends, “two thirds of the world’s polar bear population would be wiped out by the middle of the century” (Alder 45). This is just one example of the outcomes of global ice melting, being just one of the aspects of global warming. Keeping this in mind, we may see the phenomenon as quite frightening. However, there are other examples to be provided. In addition to polar bears, an animal that has already become extinct due to global warming, there is the case of the Costa Rican golden toad. Along with other amphibians (salamanders and frogs) needing a wet and moist environment to keep their skin wet and pools of water to mate and lay eggs, the Costa Rican golden toad also relies upon its wet and moist habitat to keep its species alive. Sadly, as the temperatures in the Costa Rican forests grew warmer, the golden toad’s pools dried up. Without the pools, the golden toad was unable to mate and lay eggs and, therefore, it became extinct (Lynas 63).

In addition to producing harmful effects on animals, changes in the ecosystem are also negatively impacting plants. For example, Colorado’s blue spruce and hemlock, which need cold weather to survive, are struggling to thrive as the temperatures in Colorado grow warmer (Fahrenthold). In addition, scientists predict trees such as birch, beech, and maple will also be
affected as “they are unable to reproduce in the warmer temperatures” (Mckibben. 8).

Meanwhile, it is critically important to remember that all the species and all the trees are parts of the global ecosystem; therefore, their disappearance influences other species in a mainly negative way. Our planet relies upon trees and plants to survive: they produce oxygen, cool the Earth, prevent flooding, help reduce pollutant, and absorb harmful carbon dioxide; the loss of trees will certainly be harmful to our planet. Moreover, it will increase the speed of the global warming taking the effect.

Humans are also experiencing the negative impact of the greenhouse gases they produce as “climate changes… tend[s] to harm health rather than promote it” (Brown para.2). According to the World Health Organization, the atmospheric temperature rising resulted in the death of 160,000 lives, in 2000 (Brown para.6). However, this is only the direct impact we are talking about. Meanwhile, there are much more deaths, caused by the consequences of the greenhouse effect. In a Washington Post article titled “As Temperature Rises, Health Could Decline,” reporter David Brown (2007) writes that hotter weather will affect people who are old, very young, ill, immobile, or poor as heat waves can kill them. Furthermore, Brown (2007) states that humans might also become the victims of floods and storms as the climate changes. Mayer Hillman (2007) also writes that sea levels are expected to rise by three feet at the end of the century as scientists estimate the temperature will rise as much as additional 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit. As a result, low-lying countries such as China and Bangladesh could be completely under water, with millions of lives affected (Hillman 28). It is also worthwhile remembering that we are now experiencing the lack of livable space on the surface of land, and if more of livable territories go under water, this may result in even more severe overpopulation of the Earth. Moreover, it is important not to forget about the lack of drinkable water, which many regions of
the world do already experience and which may become even more severe as the result of the
global warming. Shockingly, 100,000 people died from 1992 to 2001 due to floods (Brown
para.18). In addition, glaciers such as those in the Alps, the Himalayas, and throughout the
Andes are in “an accelerating retreat” (Struck) due to global warming. Since glaciers store 70
percent of the world’s fresh water, people in countries such as Nepal and northern India, who
rely upon water from glaciers for “growing crops, generating electricity, and sustaining cities”
(Struck) will be severely impacted by the rapidly disappearing glaciers (Struck). Currently,
farmers in Peru are witnessing shrinking crops, and many Peruvians must pay private water
truckers for water. Global warming can also produce droughts and water shortages as warm
temperatures will dry up necessary water sources, such as lakes, rivers, and wells. As a result,
“drought-prone areas will become drier,” (Eilperin), and more deaths will ensue. In addition,
mosquitoes carrying malaria and harmful bacteria such as salmonella thrive in warmer
temperatures and, therefore, also threaten to cause an increase in diseases and bacterial infections
due to global warming.

To say the least, global warming is destroying plants, wiping out animals, and killing
humans. In fact, if the global warming trend increases, plants, animals, and humans one day
might cease to exist. Therefore, it is crucial we take steps now to stop the harmful effects of
greenhouse gas emissions. Finding and using renewable energy sources, such as hydropower or
solar powered chargers, hybrid cars and alternative automobile fuels (Horn 122), are some of the
many ways we can start preventing the catastrophic effects of global warming.
Works Cited


