

Renowned OSU scientist kicks off lecture series on global warming

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Scientists overwhelmingly agree: Global warming is already affecting animals ranging from polar bears to butterflies -- and if greenhouse gas emissions remain uncurbed, the consequences for our planet will be devastating. Oregon State University's Peter U. Clark discusses climate change Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 7 p.m., starting off the Oregon Zoo's 2007 Wildlife Conservation Lecture Series.

Polar bears in the Arctic are being impacted by climate change. The ice they depend on for hunting is retreating sooner in the spring and arriving later in the fall, putting the entire species in jeopardy. Photos by ZooTeen Kourtney Kuiper, courtesy Oregon Zoo. © Oregon Zoo Climate models suggest that warming over the past few decades can only be explained by the known increase in greenhouse gas concentrations, notes Clark, a professor in OSU's department of geosciences.

Clark's areas of expertise include glacial geology and paleoclimatology, and his lecture, "Climate Change Present, Past and Future: What We Have Learned About What to Expect," describes the causes and effects of global warming.

"Human activities are causing the greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere to increase to levels the earth has not experienced in tens of millions of years," says Clark. "What is particularly unusual about the current trend is the rate of increase, which may be nearly unique in earth history. This increase is causing the earth to warm through the well-known greenhouse effect."

During his lecture, Clark gives examples from the earth's more recent history that reveal some surprising ways in which our future climate may respond to this century's extraordinary "greenhouse forcing."

"Projected future increases of greenhouse gases will cause significant climate change by the end of the 21st century, with widespread effects that will last for millennia," he says.

According to Clark, climate change will impact glaciers and ice sheets, global sea level, species distribution and extinctions, and the frequency and intensity of droughts, heat waves and possibly hurricanes.

The Wildlife Conservation Lecture series is sponsored by Pro Photo Supply, Shiels Obletz Johnsen and New Belgium Brewing. Lectures are held in the Oregon Zoo's Banquet Center and begin at 7 p.m. The cost for each lecture is \$10 for nonmembers and \$8 for members of host organizations, students or seniors.

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