

Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times by Sanjay Sondhi

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Global warming: what does it mean to me?

During a recent visit to the Himalayas, I trekked up to Har ki Dun, in the Govind National Park in Uttarakhand, where the Jaundhar glacier has its source. This glacier feeds the Tons river, which flows through Dehradun, before eventually joining the Yamuna. The local people gave me the grim news-over the years, snowfall has decreased, the glacier has receded and the flow of water in the Tons river has seen a significant reduction. In Dehradun, the decrease of water in the Tons over the years is possibly apparent to most people.

The visit set me thinking. Is global warming for real? And how does it impact us in our daily lives? Am I contributing to global warming? How can I make a difference?

Is global warming for real?

In the last hundred years, average global temperature have gone up by approx. 1 deg C. There is strong correlation between increase in temperature and the CO₂ level in the atmosphere. The current level of CO₂ in the atmosphere is 387 ppm up from 300 ppm in the early 1990's. 350 ppm is considered the tipping point, beyond which there is likely to be a significant impact of climate change. If we do not act now, CO₂ levels by the middle of this century will be 600 ppm.

How does global warming impact us?

Unpredictable weather. Warmer days. More floods. More droughts. Food disruptions. Crop failures, resulting in higher food prices. This is not “fear mongering”. This is real. Everyone of us has experienced some or all of the above in the last few years.

Am I contributing to global warming?

I did an interesting exercise yesterday. I calculated my carbon footprint. For all my concern about CO₂ emissions, where was I on this front, I wondered? The results were startling:

My carbon footprint is 7.11 tonnes per year

The average footprint for people in India is 1.20 tonnes

The average for the industrial nations is about 11 tonnes

The average worldwide carbon footprint is about 4 tonnes

The worldwide target to combat climate change is 2 tonnes

Despite leading what I had believed to be a reasonably “eco-friendly” lifestyle, my carbon footprint is huge. I have resolved to make a greater effort in my day to day life to reduce my carbon footprint. More walking and cycling, use of public transport, practice the mantra of reduce, re-cycle, re-use for all day to day things in my home. If you would like to calculate your own carbon footprint, visit <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator1.html>.



Photograph caption: Water flowing from the Jaundhar glacier, Har ki Dun

How can I make a difference?

Later this year, global leaders from across the world will meet in Copenhagen to sign a new climate treaty at the United Nations Climate Change Conference from 7-18th December, 2009. However, the responsibility of making a difference is not global leaders alone, but every single one of us. Global warming is here to stay, so lets do our bit to make a difference to help save the planet.

Sanjay Sondhi is a Dehradun based naturalist. Feedback on this column is welcome at doonwatch@gmail.com

Making a difference: 24 October, 2009, is the International Day for Climate Action. Thousands of people across the globe are committing to make a difference. Visit the website www.350.org and sign up to undertake your own action to save the planet.

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