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BYLINE: Chris **Bunting**

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FOR every scientist warning about the the dangers of global warming, there's an automobile industry lobbyist denying there's a problem. Regardless of which camp you're in, a look around the world reveals that the consequences of global warming are increasingly difficult to ignore.

"Climate change is real and it's happening now," says Lara Hansen, a senior scientist for the World Wildlife Fund.

"In our lifetime, we may be seeing the snow cap of Mount Kilimanjaro disappear by as early as 2020, the glaciers of Glacier National Park melt away by 2030 and 95 percent of the Great Barrier Reef's current coral die by 2050. And the list goes on."

Global warming refers to the increasing temperature of the earth's atmosphere and oceans. The average temperature of the earth's surface has risen 33 degrees Fahrenheit since the late 1800s and is expected to rise another 34 degrees to 42 degrees by the year 2100, according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Web site.

"The good news is we have the technology around today to cut pollution and curb global warming," says Daniel Becker, director of the Sierra Club's global-warming program.

Should the dire predictions prove true, what would the world be missing?

Take a look at eight destinations at risk.

GREAT BARRIER REEF

DISAPPEARING CORAL

In 1998 and 2002, the world's largest reef experienced "coral bleaching." This is an event in which excessively warm water causes coral to cast off the algae needed to perform photosynthesis, thus leaving it colorless and skeletal. If prolonged, this stress will ultimately kill the coral.

In 2002, between 60 percent to 95 percent of the reefs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park were bleached. Most sites recovered, but in some locations 95 percent of the reef died, and 5 percent of the reefs in total are now described as "severely damaged."

MT. KILIMANJARO

MELTING SNOW CAPS

Africa, already burdened by intense heat and severe droughts, could potentially be hit hardest by global warming. Majestic Kilimanjaro, which rises to nearly 20,000 feet, has already suffered some damage.

Its signature snowcaps have been melting, and scientists warn the entirety of its ice and snow will likely be gone by 2020. This, of course, will affect the mountain's plant and animal life.

THE MALDIVES

MASSIVE FLOODING

This tropical paradise, best known for its incredible dive sites, was among the nations hit by last year's tsunami. It suffered 82 deaths and enough damage to severely affect its much-needed tourism dollars.

The Maldives is hardly out of harm's way. As the flattest country on record - 80 percent of its landmass is less than three feet above sea level - rising ocean levels are an obvious threat. Projections for sea-level rise are between 4 and 35 inches by the end of this century, meaning a majority of the Maldives could be under water in 30 years, and all of it by 2100, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

THE ALPS

PEAKS HAVE PEAKED

Warming temps are cooking the snow.

The Alps have lost approximately half their volume of ice since the 1850s, and the IPCC claims that for every 34-degree Fahrenheit increase, the snow line is pushed upward by about 490 feet.

According to a 2003 report released by the United Nations Environment Program, Austria's snow line is expected to rise between 650 and 980 feet over the next 30 to 50 years. Italy would lose low-level skiing entirely if the altitude for snow reliability rises to 4,900 feet (half of the country's resorts are below 4,300 feet).

MANITOBA, CANADA

BEARS AT RISK

Polar bears gather in large groups on the pristine shore of Hudson Bay in Churchill, Manitoba. Now, however, this annual trek could put them in danger. The bears require ice platforms on the Hudson from which to catch ringed seals, but unseasonably warm temps are prematurely breaking up the ice, shortening the time when bears can effectively hunt. This puts them at risk of starvation, which in turn exposes them to the frigid elements (those pounds are needed for warmth) and keeps females below reproduction weight.

FLORIDA KEYS

TRIPLE THREAT

The Sunshine State, getting ever sunnier, could be in for a bit of bad luck. The Florida Keys are situated just

barely above sea level.

Studies indicate that in the past century surrounding waters have risen between 7 inches and 9 inches, with as much as 20 inches (in total) expected by century's end.

North of the Keys, the Everglades are in danger, as well. The threat comes from invasive salt waters that could interfere with ecosystems.

Currently, the freshwater Everglades are separated from the sea by a ring of mangroves. The Environmental Protection Agency warns, however, that "if the sea rises faster than the mangroves, or if large tracts of mangrove forest are damaged by hurricanes and fail to recover, much of the freshwater Everglades might disappear during the next 100 years."

Lastly, Florida's coral reefs have suffered from bleaching.

SOUTHERN SPAIN

FADING BEACHES

Spain's famously crowded beaches and beautiful islands may eventually bid the world a sad adios.

The nation's environmental ministry released a report in February that warns of both rising sea water and a shortage of rain caused by the potential push of summer temperatures into the realm of 122 degree Fahrenheit by 2070. (Spain is already experiencing excruciatingly high summer temperatures, sometimes as steamy as 113 degrees Fahrenheit.)

GLACIER NAT'L. PARK

GLACIAL EROSION

Of the 150 or so glaciers that once existed in Montana's million-acre park in 1850, only 26 remain - over an 80 percent drop. Unless Glacier National Park changes its name, we might have the biggest case of false advertising since Erik the Red dubbed a vast, barren ice desert "Greenland" to attract settlers.

Since 1900, Glacier's average summer temperatures have increased by about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the National Parks Conservation Association. Park scientists warn that if nothing is done to curtail global warming, there won't be a single glacier left in the park by the year 2050.

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