

*You will hear an environmentalist talking about threats to the Earth. For questions 1-10, complete the notes. You will need to write a word, or a short phrase, in each box. Write only the words you hear. You now have 30 seconds to read the notes.*

We've all heard of global warming, but what exactly is it and why is it such a danger to our planet? Most scientists agree that global warming is a real threat and that it is man who is responsible for the current rise in the Earth's temperature. Our use of fossil fuels, such as oil, coal, gas and electricity to power our modern lifestyles emits a staggering 70 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every day. And these emissions create a kind of ceiling that surrounds the planet – a bit like greenhouse glass – which then causes the temperature to rise.

The amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is the highest it has been for 150,000 years – with 2000-2009 thought to have been the hottest decade in recent history – and if we continue producing these levels, it's predicted it will become hotter than at any time in the past two million years. Already, in some parts of the world, temperatures have risen by up to four degrees in 50 years.

A hotter planet inevitably means that rivers and wetlands – vital to humans and wildlife – are drying up. Around 41 per cent of the world's population has problems with water supply due to rivers and lakes shrinking, and more than 20 per cent of our 10,000 freshwater species have become extinct.

While 72 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered in water, only three per cent of it is fresh (and that's including the glaciers) and drinkable. And this small supply is unevenly distributed, with just 10 countries sharing 60 per cent of the world's water reserves. Here in the UK, we are not immune to shortages. London is drier than Istanbul, while the south-east of England has less water available per person than in countries such as Sudan and Syria. Meanwhile, our water consumption – 150 litres per person every day – is only making matters worse. Rainforests, such as the Amazon, have a huge role to play in keeping carbon levels under control. Millions of trees in these areas produce oxygen and absorb CO<sub>2</sub> in a process called photosynthesis, which is vital to the balance of the ecosystem. However, man has gradually destroyed rainforests, contributing to global warming.

The destruction of natural habitats has brought many species to the brink of extinction. Some have been destroyed by man, through farming and tree logging, while other areas have fallen victim to forest fires and shrinking rivers.

Dolphins and whales, for example, face many dangers, including pollution, which can affect their fertility. Their food sources are also under threat due to rising sea temperatures, and dolphins, in particular, often get caught in fishing nets.

There are a number of alternative energy sources. These include hydroelectric energy, which is basically fast-moving water that can be converted into electricity and which produces a clean, carbon-free, renewable source of energy. Today's wind power turbines are 100 times more powerful than 20 years ago. Wind farms produce enough power worldwide to service 47 million people. It is in these areas that we must look to the future, in order to save our planet.