Henry N. Pollack: A world without ice

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A World Without Ice is an outstanding book. It is a discussion of ice, especially polar ice, and global warming. The author is Dr. Henry Pollack, Professor Emeritus of Geological Sciences at the University of Michigan. He has had a long and illustrious career studying global change, including advising the National Science Foundation, and membership on the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Dr. Pollack and his colleagues on this panel won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for their work on global warming.

Dr. Pollack explains the role of ice in the world's climate, then goes on to discuss the effects of the warming climate on the polar and high altitude ice storehouses. He discusses the impacts on the environment and global climate as the rate of melting accelerates or as less snow accumulates. Most people focus on the resulting sea rise and endangerment of coastal communities. But perhaps even more catastrophic would be the loss of water supply to areas that count on the melting of mountain snow to provide fresh water during summer. Where would we get drinking water, and water for crops if this source disappeared? Also as less water reaches inland lakes to recharge them, and humans continue to remove water, those lakes

will become more saline. Even the melting of permafrost in far away Alaska can have major affects on the rest of the world. These are but a few of the impacts on the life of man should the glaciers and snowpack melt. Pollack does discuss the politics of global warming, especially the raging debate about whether global warming really exists. My favorite statement in the book is "When ice gets sufficiently warm it melts. Ice asks no questions, presents no arguments, reads no newspapers, and listens to no debates. It is not burdened by ideology and carries no political agendas. It just melts." Saying that, he then goes on to explain the evidence that indicates that global warming is happening. He does not just go around crying wolf. He dedicates a chapter to possible methods by which we can slow global warming or mitigate its effects on humanity.

This book is written for the general public and as such is really easy to understand. I have seldom seen a scientist write so well for the nonscientist. His explanations of how scientists can tell that the climate is warming faster that is should be if just natural causes were at play are clear and lacking the usual scientific jargon. I highly recommend this book for both the general public and the scientist.

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