

Guide to the Science of Climate Change in the 21st Century (Front Matter)



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This Guide was prepared as a community service. Its sole purpose is educational. It follows the outline of a course presented at the University of Calgary since 2007 titled 'The Science of Global Warming and Climate Change'.

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Readers of the Guide are encouraged to express their opinions to the author by email, ManzGSCC@shaw.ca.

**Title Page: Eco Print, 'Alexandra's Playground', by Nora J. Manz - 2020
Nora's eco-prints reflect the unexpected wonder of human relationship with nature.**

Preface

The effects of global warming and climate change are being experienced. The effects are negative, significant and appear to be increasing in severity. Society, individuals, entire communities, local to international, on a global scale are being traumatized. The preservation/ protection of all valued aspects of society and the natural environment requires adaptation to the effects of what is now being called ‘the new normal’ yet to be defined and possibly within our control.

Climate is distinct from weather. Weather is a day-to-day phenomenon and when averaged over long periods of time will describe climate. Today climate and most of the forces and elements that ultimately define it are understood. Strategies to use this knowledge to predict climate change have been developed and are able to Guide adaptation and mitigation efforts.

If it is accepted that global warming and climate change are occurring and that there will be serious impacts society urgently requires some idea what these might be. Forecasts/ predictions need to be made. These include:

- Identification of what the impacts might be. What needs to be adapted to?
- Who will be affected? How will they be affected?
- When do we need to adapt?
- What must we do? How do we prepare?
- What will it cost?
- How will I be affected and what do I do?
- Can we stop/ manage/ avoid/ limit the need to adapt (mitigation)?

These are global questions requiring global discussion to arrive at workable global answers and decisions that can be acted on. We all breath the same air. Everything we do affects the whole planet.

Society is divided into at least four groups as it pertains awareness and belief in the science of global warming and climate change.

1. Those who are actively engaged in learning the science as represented by the scientists, want to understand the impacts of climate change, wish to prepare to adapt to its impacts, and actively take steps to eliminate or at least reduce the factors contributing to the

phenomena of global warming (mitigation).

2. Those who are aware there is a problem and are willing to rely solely on ‘experts’ or a group representing experts for their views. They might be intimidated by the experts and feel reluctant to express their views or they might have the ability to understand the science but have limited desire to learn and assess the science for themselves.

3. Those who do not believe the claim that global warming and subsequent climate change are caused by human activity. This is the so-called denialist community. Their perspectives include:

- Climate has always changed and it is simply a natural process which we cannot do anything about.
- Humans are simply not capable of being a cause for global warming and climate change. We are in the hands of a higher spiritual being. It is our fate.
- It is part of a conspiracy to damage or destroy the economy, our way of life, the fossil fuel industry, a political faction, etc.
- The science of global warming and climate change is not sufficiently developed to be taken seriously.

4. Those who simply ignore the issue altogether for a variety of reasons.

- They believe that they are incapable of understanding the problem and therefore cannot contribute to the solution.
- They do not have access to information that would assist them to understand the problem and therefore cannot contribute to the solution.
- Their opinion is worthless or won’t be heard so let someone else address the issue.
- Let others deal with the problem, if there is one, and leave them alone.
- They don’t know that the problem exists.

One of the more interesting aspects of the global warming and climate change conversation is that people with little or no real understanding of the science find it possible to accept that it (global warming and climate change) is occurring, believe the impacts on our global environment are and will be devastating and that drastic measures must be immediately taken to mitigate its occurrence. When science discusses the nature and impacts of climate change (observed or forecast) or what mitigation activities must be taken the information and advice

are accepted as the sage advice and assessment of experts with very little if any understanding of the science and therefore without the ability to defend the expert perspectives. With knowledge of the science of global warming and climate change, even some of it, it is possible to contribute to very important discussions, not just defending the science but also those dealing with research needs, information collection, education and study and advocating for the support for funding these activities.

With some knowledge of the science of global warming and climate change it is possible to counter the questionable arguments of the denialist community or support the arguments of the experts.

With some knowledge of the science of global warming and climate change it is possible to teach others, to spread the word regarding the serious impacts on the horizon if no action is taken with the ability to explain the background science to people of all ages, relationships, backgrounds, education, profession, political views, governance responsibilities, social status, nationality, race, religion, wealth, etc. in a language and manner they are familiar with and in a manner that they would relate to. Everyone can become an activist – over a tea, in the office or in front of an audience of thousands. Some must become activists, as individuals or by supporting or becoming part of organizations operating at the local, provincial, national and international levels.

Knowledgeable persons, world wide, need to stand up, present themselves and communicate the nature and seriousness of climate change. It is a need. They need access to information on the science.

It is very important that information on the science of climate change be obtained from ‘knowledgeable and trustworthy’ sources. It is a serious problem when sources are ‘ignorant, uninformed, dishonest or have biases that favour their agenda’. The quality of the information provided will determine the quality and nature of perspectives, assessments and selection management solutions.

If people wish to develop knowledge of the science for global warming and climate change and find the need to accept opinion and advice from others, they must choose their advisors, their experts, their ‘gurus’ carefully.

The purpose of this Guide is empowering individuals who don’t want to rely solely on ‘experts’ by providing them the opportunity to learn the science for themselves, at least provide a solid overview. It is hoped that this would allow them to be able to identify true scientific experts and to form conclusions based on accepted scientific knowledge; and, enable them to continue the learning process themselves. Not all people are able or willing to take the time to learn the science, even at a rudimentary level, and must still accept the opinion and advice of those knowledgeable of the science. But learning even a little about the science is a great help and if the individual is capable of learning, even a little, developing some understanding of the science

may be viewed as a social responsibility.

A word about science. What is science? Why should we trust it? Why should society be guided by scientists?

Science is the systematic study of nature, the world and the universe. It includes us, humans. It includes but is not limited to the study of physics, chemistry, biology and social behaviour. It also includes the study and development of methods to use science to support human endeavour such as engineering, agriculture, medicine, psychology, sociology, and education. Scientific study and the resulting knowledge are responsible for virtually every aspect of modern life, food, shelter, security, transportation, sports, recreation, health care to name a few. Society relies on science and the creation of more science.

Science is performed by people known as scientists. Everyone is a scientist to some degree; but people who are referred to as scientists have taken special training, usually in a college or university in order to maximize the benefit from previously developed scientific knowledge and from the knowledge that is in the process of being refined (dialogue within the peer and mentor community).

Scientists practice what is known as the **scientific method**. A good definition of the scientific method is: a method of procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses. Criticism is the backbone of the scientific method.

When scientists wish to ‘share’ their work with other scientists they automatically solicit review and criticism. Scientists may wish to publish their work in scientific journals known for publishing quality scientific research. But before this can happen their work is peer reviewed (critically reviewed) by other independent scientists knowledgeable in their field of study. Deficiencies are identified and corrected before the work is published. The peer review helps ensure that the work reported meets the minimum standards for integrity and significance. Peer reviewed scientific contributions allow for the growth of knowledge in any particular field of study. Knowledge gained in this way may be called ‘scientific knowledge’ and is trusted to be the most accurate available.

It should be clear that the scientific knowledge, on any subject, builds on previously developed or collected knowledge. This is particularly true for mature subjects (subjects for which there is substantial knowledge). Occasionally there is confusion when observations appear contradictory or theory is not supported but these ‘bumps’ provoke intense scrutiny and resolution and even better science. Scientific knowledge grows with the accumulation of scientific knowledge and the acquisition of more, improved and new observations. Frontiers of knowledge are advanced slowly. Hypotheses are always being tested using available theory, data and analytical ability. Anomalous observations and phenomena provoke close examination and explanation – more supporting science may be needed. Developing consensus is a slow

but necessary process.

The ‘science of climate change’ is very complex but is well developed. Recent innovations in data acquisition and computational capabilities have enhanced the ability to consider more and greater details of the global climate system. This in turn has resulted in a better understanding of the science of global warming and climate change and the ability to predict adaptation and mitigation needs.

Governance must be performed on the basis of accepted science though this might be the greatest challenge individuals who assume governing responsibilities may have. In democracies or near democracies the leadership is determined by the electorate; that is, individuals. For leadership to consider the global warming and climate change situation seriously, the electorate (individuals) must also take it seriously. The electorate must be educated and leadership must be encouraged to take the advice of available expertise which governments have the responsibility to support.

Individuals (including leadership) must be empowered with a knowledge and trust of science and scientists. All segments of our community need to participate freely in the discussion - all ages, all genders regardless of nationality, religion, philosophy, politics, wealth, education, profession – everyone. The discussions can occur using every available form of discourse and expression, internet, social media, radio, television, writing, debate, music, song, drama, theater, dance or art. Everything that can be done to further this process and identify strategies to counter the threat of climate change is important and serves not only the individual, but the country and the planet.

Science is blind to agendas. Science is not faith based. It is not magical. It is reality. It is truth. It must be the foundation on which we base our decisions.

Science is science – it simply is. There is only one science.

Global warming and climate change are happening and our global community must at least attempt to limit its impact.

There are many sources which describe the science of climate change. Most have their origins in the various publications of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) or sources that have contributed to them. For reasons of accuracy and completeness the IPCC publications are substantial documents. For most people they are very difficult to read and understand even in a synopsis form. If its any comfort there are few if any scientists who can say they understand all of the subjects included in the science. But scientists believe scientists.

The science as described in this Guide is complete, presented in a logical fashion and to the extent possible is up-to-date and correct. Considerable effort has been made to make the

subject material as clear as possible, to facilitate self-learning and to connect the content to existing and future knowledge sources. The subject material is not ‘dumbed down’.

This Guide is intended to be read and understood by anyone who is sincerely interested in learning about the science of climate change.

For some the Guide will become their entry point into the science of climate change as it is actually being performed – potentially life altering, career altering, opportunity for advocacy or a determinant in career choice.

Writing this Guide was an important community service. I was able to do it so I did.

A note on this publication.

A perfectly good question is: “Why is this Guide published and distributed for free on the internet?” There are a few reasons:

1. Much of the best material presented such as photographs and graphs are proprietary and only available without cost if there is no commercial gain. The Guide would be too expensive. If the material was excluded the Guide would be incomplete and dated.
2. The process of publishing a book-type Guide would take a long time. The Guide needs to be available asap.
3. Most of the references used are web sites. The material is high quality, available and free of charge but is dynamic. There unpredictable changes. The updates can be managed if the Guide is published on the internet – not so if it was published in book form which would limit most of the material referenced to works previously published in hard copy – not a good choice in todays information environment and a serious issue that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change deals with. The Guide provides information to the youth of today
4. Critical feedback from readers can be reviewed and assessed. The Guide can be edited very easily when required.
5. The Guide is a living document. It will evolve.

Acknowledgements

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change undertook and succeeded in synthesizing the scholarly work of thousands of researchers from all scientific disciplines to create the field of study and applied science now known as Climate Change. The foresight and commitment of the many people and nations to recognize and proceed to address and resolve the challenge of climate change to humanity and all life on Earth is impossible to overstate.

The support of the University of Calgary, Faculty of Continuing Education was invaluable to the development of this Guide by virtue of their faith in me as a scientist, scholar, educator and concerned citizen of the world. They provided the encouragement and resources necessary for the development of the course on the science of global warming and climate change. The students of the course contributed more than they know. It is an honour to have this work recognized by the Alberta Order of Excellence.

Thanks go to the numerous people who reviewed and edited the drafts of this Guide to ensure that it was readable and understandable to the intended audience. Roy Schneider was particularly helpful.

Dedication

This Guide is dedicated to all those who wish to learn about climate change, in particular the youth of today, future generations, including my son, his wife, and my grandchildren.

Table of Contents

Preface

Acknowledgements

Dedication

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Information support

Chapter 2 History of the Scientific Study of Climate Change

2.1 Information Support

Chapter 3 Weather vs. Climate

Chapter 4 Earth's Energy Budget

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Concept of energy

4.3 Solar energy

4.4 Energy budget

4.5 Conservation of energy

4.6 Greenhouse effect

4.7 Impact of human activities on the energy budget

4.8 Information support

Chapter 5 Carbon Cycle

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Units

5.3 Carbon in the atmosphere

- 5.4 Plant biomass (terrestrial)**
- 5.5 Oceans**
- 5.6 Fossil pool**
- 5.7 Fossil fuels, cement and land use change**
- 5.8 Weathering**
- 5.9 Information support**

Chapter 6

Hydrological Cycle

- 6.1 Introduction**
- 6.2 Basic elements of the hydrological cycle**
- 6.3 Evaporation and evapotranspiration**
- 6.4 Convection and cloud formation**
- 6.5 Precipitation**
- 6.6 Snow and ice**
- 6.7 Runoff**
- 6.8 Distribution of water on Earth**
- 6.9 Ice caps, glaciers, ice streams, ice field, ice sheets, ice shelves,
and sea ice**
- 6.10 Isotopes of oxygen, hydrogen, deuterium and water**
- 6.11 Information support**

Chapter 7

Global Circulation of the Atmosphere

- 7.1 Introduction**
- 7.2 Characteristics of the atmosphere**
- 7.3 Early perception of global circulation of the atmosphere**
- 7.4 Actual global circulation of the atmosphere**
- 7.5 Ozone and the ozone hole**
- 7.6 Information support**

Chapter 8

Global Circulation of Water in the Ocean

	8.1 Introduction
	8.2 Ocean currents
	8.3 Gulf Stream
	8.4 Information support
Chapter 9	Climate and Seasons
	9.1 Temperate zones – northern and southern hemispheres
	9.2 Tropical zones
	9.3 Monsoons
	9.3.1 Southwest Indian monsoon
	9.3.2 West African monsoon
	9.4 Intertropical convergence zone (ICZ)
	9.5 Predictability
	9.6 Information support
Chapter 10	Hurricanes, Typhoons and Cyclones
	10.1 Introduction
	10.2 Hurricanes and tropical cyclones
	10.3 Monitoring tropical cyclones
	10.4 Effect of ENSO on tropical cyclones
	10.5 Information support
Chapter 11	El Niño-Southern Oscillation
	11.1 Introduction
	11.2 ENSO normal conditions
	11.3 El Niño
	11.4 La Niña
	11.5 Global impact of ENSO
	11.6 Prediction of ENSO events
	11.7 Information support

Chapter 12

Climate Change – Natural Forces

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Tectonic activity

12.3 Solar radiation, sun spots and cosmic radiation

12.4 Milankovitch Cycles – changes in Earth’s orbit and orientation to the sun

12.5 Volcanic activity

12.6 Global dimming

12.7 Information support

Chapter 13

Paleoclimatology

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Variation of Earth’s temperature over the last 500 million years

13.3 Climatic data obtained from proxy sources

13.3.1 Historical records

13.3.2 Tree rings

13.3.3 Lake sediments

13.3.4 Corals

13.3.5 Ice cores – Antarctica and Greenland

13.3.6 Ice cores – ice caps

13.3.7 Speleothems

13.3.8 Loess

13.3.9 Boreholes

13.3.10 Marine sediments

13.3.11 Geomorphic features

13.3.12 Pollen

13.3.13 Oxygen isotopes and hydrogen isotopes

13.3.14 Stomatal density (Stomata Density Index, SDI)

13.3.15 Radiocarbon or Carbon-14 dating

13.3.16 Beryllium 10 and 7

13.3.17 Radiometric dating or radioactive dating

13.3.18 Leaf wax

13.3.19 Anecdotal and ad hoc historical data

13.4 Ice ages

13.5 Little ice age

13.6 Information support

Chapter 14

Modern Instrumental Period

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Instrumental temperature record

14.3 Modern instrumentation

14.4 Satellites

14.4 Information support

Chapter 15

Greenhouse Gases

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Types of greenhouse gas emissions

15.3 Carbon dioxide emissions by fuel type

15.4 Carbon dioxide emissions from cement production

15.5 Methane (CH₄) emissions

15.6 Greenhouse gas emissions by sector

15.7 Greenhouse gas emissions by country

15.8 Collection of greenhouse gas data

15.8.1 Land and ocean-based GHG monitoring and sampling

15.8.2 Aircraft GHG sampling

15.8.3 Satellite based monitoring

- 15.9 Natural and anthropogenic radiative forcing**
- 15.10 Carbon footprint and auditing**
- 15.11 Emission intensity or carbon intensity**
- 15.12 Carbon neutral, decarbonizing, net zero, carbon efficiency**
- 15.13 Carbon management**
 - 15.13.1 Cap-and-trade (carbon allowance, carbon cap, carbon credits, carbon offsets, negative emissions)**
 - 15.13.2 Carbon tax**
 - 15.13.3 Carbon dividend**
 - 15.13.4 Carbon leakage**
 - 15.13.5 Carbon tariff**
 - 15.13.6 Carbon pricing**
 - 15.13.7 Avoided emissions**
 - 15.13.8 Renewable energy certificate**
- 15.14 Information support**

Chapter 16

Observation and Impacts of Recent Climate Change

- 16.1 Introduction**
- 16.2 Temperature and greenhouse gas**
- 16.3 Ocean acidification**
- 16.4 Arctic**
 - 16.4.1 Sea ice**
 - 16.4.2 Permafrost**
 - 16.4.3 Loss and change of habitat**
 - 16.4.4 Transportation**
 - 16.4.5 Territorial claims**
 - 16.4.6 Methane and GHG's**
 - 16.4.7 Glaciers**

- 16.5 Greenland**
- 16.6 Antarctica**
- 16.7 Oceans**
 - 16.7.1 Warming**
 - 16.7.2 Sea level**
- 16.8 Coral reefs**
- 16.9 Fish**
- 16.10 Droughts**
- 16.11 Desertification**
- 16.12 Wildfires**
- 16.13 Tropical cyclones**
- 16.14 Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES**
- 16.15 Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD**
- 16.16 Habitat change – natural environment – general Comments**
- 16.17 Glaciers**
- 16.18 Regional impacts of climate change**
 - IPCC Climate Change 2014, Synthesis Report, AR5**
- 16.19 Extreme weather**
- 16.20 Comments**
- 16.21 Information support**

Chapter 17

Climate Models

- 17.1 Introduction**
- 17.2 Climate models**
- 17.3 Data available for climate models**
- 17.4 Climate models**

**17.4.1 Atmosphere-ocean general circulation models
(AOGCM)**

17.4.2 Earth system models (ESM)

17.4.3 Regional climate models

17.4.4 Coupled model intercomparison project, CMIP5

**17.5 Model prediction of surface temperature change compared
to observed**

17.6 Assessment of model predictions

17.7 Information support

Chapter 18

Impacts of Climate Change on Physical Systems

18.1 Introduction

18.2 Scenarios

18.3 Projected impacts physical impacts

18.3.1 Temperature

**18.3.2 Water – soil moisture, runoff, precipitation,
evaporation**

18.3.3 Cryosphere

18.3.4 Sea level

18.3.5 Ocean chemistry

18.3.6 Jet stream

18.3.7 Atlas of global and regional climate projections

18.4 Climate phenomena and regional climate change

18.5 Information support

Chapter 19

Adaptation

19.1 Introduction

19.2 Nature

19.3 Humans and human managed systems

	19.4 Information support
Chapter 20	Mitigation
	20.1 Introduction
	20.2 The science
	20.3 Consequences of unconstrained continued emission of greenhouse gases.
	20.4 Strategies for limiting temperature increases to between 1-2 °C
	20.5 Mitigation strategies
	20.6 Paris Agreement
	20.7 Information support
Chapter 21	Sixth Assessment Report – AR6
	21.1 Introduction
	21.2 Outcomes of note
	21.3 AR6 simulations
	21.4 Information support
Chapter 22	Comments
Chapter 23	Glossary
Chapter 24	Selected Web Sites
	2.1 Educational
	2.2 Newsletters

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Factors affecting weather and climate.

Figure 4.1 Sun's radiant energy that reaches Earth's atmosphere and surface.

Figure 4.2 Wavelength description of radiant energy.

Figure 4.3 Absorption of Sun's radiant energy that reaches Earth's atmosphere and surface.

Figure 4.4 Absorption of solar radiation by Earth's atmosphere.

Figure 4.5 Global Energy Budget taken from http://climateknowledge.org/figures/Rood_Climate_Change_AOSS480_Documents/Kiehl_Trenberth_Radiative_Balance_BAMS_1997.pdf.

Figure 4.6 Energy budget of atmosphere.

Figure 4.7. Components of energy budget affected by human activities.

Figure 5.1 Carbon Cycle. (Office of Biological and Environmental Research of the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science)

Figure 5.2 Photosynthesis and respiration in plants.

Figure 5.3 Vegetative biomass capable of converting CO₂ to plant tissue.

Figure 5.4 Depth zones in the ocean where photosynthesis can and cannot occur.

Figure 5.5 Occurrence of methyl hydrate beneath the sea floor, in permafrost areas and beneath some ice sheets and the processes that destroy methane sinks in the sediments, ocean and atmosphere. (<https://www.usgs.gov/news/gas-hydrate-breakdown-unlikely-cause-massive-greenhouse-gas-release>)

Figure 5.6 The geologic carbonate-silicate cycle taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enhanced_weathering#:~:text=When%20silicate%20or%20carbonate%20minerals,2%20%E2%86%92%20H2CO

Figure 6.1 Hydrological cycle.

Figure 6.2 Graph showing surface runoff from melting snow from plains and mountainous regions.

Figure 6.3 Distribution of water on Earth.

Figure 6.4 Columbia icefield and the Athabasca Glacier flowing from it.

Figure 6.5 Greenland ice sheet.

Figure 6.6 Antarctica ice sheet, sea ice and shelf.

Figure 6.7 Floating sea ice in the Arctic.

Figure 7.1 Schematic showing different layers of the atmosphere (not to scale).

Figure 7.2 Early perception of global circulation of the atmosphere.

Figure 7.3 Actual global circulation of the atmosphere.

Figure 7.4 (a) and (b) Cross section of the subtropical and polar jet streams by latitude.

Figure 7.5 General configuration of the subtropical and polar jet streams by latitude.

Figure 7.6 Ozone hole over Antarctica shown in blue.

Figure 8.1 Two views of the thermohaline circulation or 'global ocean conveyor belt'.

Figure 8.2 Atlantic portion of the global conveyor belt.

Figure 8.3 Ocean currents in the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Islands.

Figure 8.4 Global surface water ocean currents during northern hemisphere winter.

Figure 9.1 Climate zones. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subtropics>

Figure 9.2 Monsoonal regions worldwide.

Figure 9.4 West African monsoon

<https://www.britannica.com/science/West-African-monsoon>.

Figure 9.5 Location of the Intertropical Convergence Zone and Horse Latitudes.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_latitudes

Figure 10.1 Regions of the world where tropical cyclones occur.

Figure 10.2 Formation of a thunderstorm over the ocean.

Figure 10.3 Formation of a tropical cyclone.

Figure 10.4 Anatomy of a tropical cyclone (northern hemisphere).

Figure 10.5 Satellite images of tropical depressions forming in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa and moving West.

Figure 10.6 Satellite images of a tropical hurricane in the Atlantic, northern hemisphere.

Figure 10.7 Forecast tracks for a tropical storm which becomes a hurricane.

Figure 10.8 Spaghetti models on which the forecast tracks are based.

Figure 10.9 Satellite image of hurricane being tracked in Figures 10.7 and 10.8.

Figure 11.1 The Walker circulation.

Figure 11.2 Normal or neutral equatorial atmospheric and ocean water circulation.

https://www.weather.gov/jetstream/enso_patterns

Figure 11.3 Equatorial atmospheric and ocean water circulation during El Niño.

Figure 11.5 Summary of conditions associated with normal, El Niño and La Niña events.

Figure 11.4 Equatorial atmospheric and ocean water circulation during La Niña.

Figure 11.6 ENSO conditions and their east-west impact on global climate. Source: NOAA Climate.gov drawing by Fiona Martin.

Figure 11.7 Typical average position of the jet stream during normal, El Niño and La Niña.

https://www.weather.gov/jetstream/enso_impacts

Figure 11.8 (a) El Niño effects during December through February.

https://www.weather.gov/jetstream/enso_impacts

Figure 11.8 (b) El Niño effects during June through August.

Figure 11.8 (c) La Niña effects during December through February.

Figure 11.8 (d) La Niña effects during June through August.

Figure 11.9 The impacts of ENSO on the hurricane season in the Atlantic and eastern Pacific from <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/enso/impacts-el-ni%C3%B1o-and-la-ni%C3%B1a-hurricane-season>

Figure 11.10 Niño regions and locations where atmospheric pressure is monitored to calculate the SOI.

Figure 11.11 Prediction and confirmation of El Niño and La Niña events based on SST in Niño 3.4 and the SOI.

Figure 11.12 The use of the Oceanic Niño Index for predicting El Niño and La Niña events from https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/lanina/enso_evolution-status-fcsts-web.pdf.

Figure 12.1 Earth climate system.

Figure 12.2 A segment of Earth from its center, the core, to its outer surface consisting of the lithosphere and the crust.

Figure 12.3 Note the Earth's crust consists of the ocean crust and the much thicker continental crust.

Figure 12.4 Plates as they exist today.

Figure 12.5 Earth supercontinent, Pangaea, 240 million years or more.

Figure 12.6 Continental drift.

Figure 12.6 Thrust and reverse fault movement resulting in mountain formation.

Figure 12.7 Subduction.

Figure 12.8 Movement of magma within the Earth's crust.

Figure 12.9 Ring of fire. Volcanic activity on the Pacific Rim.

Figure 12.10 Solar cycle variations – daily and annual.

Figure 12.11 Sunspots on surface of the sun.

Figure 12.12 Difference between a solar maximum and a solar minimum.

Figure 12.13 Variation of Earth's orbit around the Sun – eccentricity.

Figure 12.14 Variation of the tilt of the Earth's axis of rotation – axial tilt or obliquity.

Figure 12.15 Variation of Earth's rotational axis – precession.

Figure 12.16 Rotation of Earth's orbit around the sun – apsidal precession.

Figure 12.17 Back and forth tilt of the plane of Earth's orbit around the Sun relative to a reference plane – orbital oscillation.

Figure 12.18 Berger astronomical model of orbital variability, past, present and future.

Figure 12.19 Volcanic eruption releasing ash and a variety of aerosols and gases.

Figure 12.20 Mt. Pinatubo and global circulation of ash.

Figure 12.21 Volcanic eruptions since 1870.

Figure 12.22 Sun-blocking aerosols around the world since the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo according to satellite estimates. NASA

Figure 12.23 Contrails 2001.

Figure 12.24 Forest fires – eastern China.

Figure 12.25 Forest fires 2020 – western United States, NASA.

Figure 12.26 Pollution - Golden Gate Bridge – San Francisco.

Figure 12.27 Dust storm sweeping across the Middle East – NASA.

Figure 13.1 Geologic time scale V. 5.0 as prepared by the Geologic Society of America.

Figure 13.2 Variation of Earth's temperature over last 500 million years
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleoclimatology> .

Figure 13.3 Variation of Earth's temperature over last 65 million years.

Figure 13.4 Variation of Earth's temperature over last 12,000 years
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleoclimatology>

Figure 13.5 Variation of Earth's temperature over last two thousand years.

Figure 13.6 Global average temperature change – 1850 to present.

Figure 13.7 Tree ring dating.

Figure 13.8 Extending tree ring dating using multiple sources of wood from same region.

Figure 13.9 Sampling a coral.

Figure 13.10 Annular rings on a coral.

Figure 13.11 (a), (b) and (c) Deep ice core drilling, coring equipment and core storage.

Figure 13.12 Examples of ice core from different depths.

Figure 13.13 (a) and (b) Shallow ice core drilling.

Figures 13.14 (a), (b) and (c) Stalactites, stalagmite and cross-section.

Figure 13.15 Loess deposit.

Figure 13.16 Wind blowing dust that will eventually form a loess deposit.

Figure 13.17 Typical borehole drilling equipment.

Figure 13.18 Boreholes where temperature measurement has been taken worldwide.

Figure 13.19 Marine sediment sampling ship, drilling equipment and sediment cores being extracted and examined.

Figure 13.20 Bar graph illustrating relationship between pollen types and corresponding age illustrating beginning of the Holocene period.

Figure 13.21 Oxygen and hydrogen isotopes in water.

Figure 13.22 Photograph of stomata.

Figure 13.23 (a) and (b) 420,000 years of ice core data from Vostok Antarctica research station and stages of glaciation over the past 1,000,000 years predicted by Milankovitch Cycles.

Figure 13.24 Areas of land and sea ice for most recent ice age. (Satellite imagemap, ETOPO2, http://www.planetaryvisions.com/Earth_texture_map.php?pid=4101)

Figure 13.25 Comparison of 800,000 years of ice core data from the European Project for Ice Coring in Antarctica (EPICA) and 420,000 years of ice core data from Vostok Antarctica research station.

Figure 13.26 Temperature, carbon dioxide and oxygen isotope variation over the past three million years. <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2019/04/first-successful-model-simulation-of-the-past-3-million-years-of-climate-change/>

Figure 13.27 Global average temperature 0 – present highlighting the ‘medieval warm period’ and the ‘little ice age’.

Figure 14.1 Global average temperature change – 1850 to present.

Figure 14.2 Global Observing System – WMO <https://public.wmo.int/en/programmes/global-observing-system>

Figure 14.3 Modern surface weather station, U.S. Climate Reference Network Station, Ithaca, New York.

Figure 14.4 Weather ship MS Polarfront at sea – decommissioned in 2009. Note that weatherships are no longer used.

Figure 14.5 Weather buoy operated by the NOAA National Buoy Center.

Figure 14.6 Weather Station – remote land based.

Figure 14.7 Antarctic automatic weather station – part of the automatic weather stations project AWS in Antarctica.

Figure 14.8 Commercial automatic weather observation station AWOS.

Figure 14.9 Remote manned weather stations.

Figure 14.10 Weather balloons with radiosonde.

Figure 14.11 NASA Earth science spacecraft and instruments in orbit.

Figure 14.12 GOES-8, a United States weather satellite of the meteorological-satellite service. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_satellite

Figure 14.13 Global precipitation measurement from NASA GES DISC satellite https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/GPM/overview/index.html

Figure 14.14 Infrared Sounder on NASA's Aqua Satellite.

<https://airs.jpl.nasa.gov/#:~:text=AIRS%2C%20the%20Atmospheric%20Infrared%20Sounder,gases%2C%20surface%20and%20cloud%20properties.>

Figure 14.15 Ice thickness. <https://icesat-2.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

Figure 15.1 The Keeling Curve, monthly mean carbon dioxide measured at Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii. <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/>

Figure 15.2 Daily averaged carbon dioxide concentration measured at Barrow, Alaska, Mauna Loa, Hawaii, American Samoa and South Pole, Antarctica.

https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/gl_trend.html

Figure 15.3 Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration in ice cores taken from the Antarctic ice sheet. <https://ourworldindata.org/atmospheric-concentrations>

Figure 15.4 Global carbon dioxide emissions, 1850 to 2040.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions>

Figure 15.5 Emissions of GHG's in 2018 in the U. S. by gas.

<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases>

Figure 15.6 Global manmade greenhouse gas emissions by gas, 2015.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions>

Figure 15.7 Concentration of GHG's from 0 to 2005.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/greenhouse_gas_basics_e3148

Figure 15.8 Global manmade greenhouse gas emissions by sector, 2013.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions.>

Figure 15.9 Greenhouse gas emissions by sector, U. S., 1990-2014.

<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/us-greenhouse-gas-inventory-report-1990-2014.>

Figure 15.10 Detailed global emissions by sector.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter1.pdf

Figure 15.11 Greenhouse gas emissions for major economies, 1990-2030.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions.>

Figure 15.12 Greenhouse gas emissions for top emitters, 2017

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions.>

Figure 15.13 Cumulative greenhouse gas emissions for major economies, 1751-2017.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions.>

Figure 15.14 Per Capita greenhouse gas emissions for major economies, and the world, 2017.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions.>

Figure 15.15 Per capita emissions for different income brackets.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter1.pdf

Figure 15.16 Per capita GHG emissions by country from IPCC.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter1.pdf

Figure 15.17 Greenhouse gas intensity for major economies and the World, 2017.

<https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20the%20primary%20sources%20of,72%20percent%20of%20all%20emissions>

Figure 15.18 Greenhouse gas intensity for cross-section of countries.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter1.pdf

Figure 15.19 Land and ocean-based sampling of GHG's, ozone, and aerosols.

<https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/dv/iadv/index.php?code=mlo>

Figure 15.20 Aircraft GHG sampling program operated by NOAA.

<http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/aircraft/>

Figure 15.21 Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite, GOSAT or Ibuki (Japanese) is the first satellite dedicated to GHG monitoring. It measures carbon dioxide and methane.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_Gases_Observing_Satellite

Figure 15.22 NASA Orbiting Carbon Observatory-2.

https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/oco2/index.html

Figure 15.23 Averaged carbon dioxide concentration Oct 1 – Nov 11, 2014 from OCO-2.

<https://www.nasa.gov/jpl/oco2/pia18934>

Figure 15.24 Carbon monoxide measurements from NASA's Atmospheric Infrared Sounder (AIRS).

<https://climate.nasa.gov/news/3019/nasa-monitors-carbon-monoxide-from-california-wildfires/>

Figure 15.25 Geostationary carbon cycle observatory, EVM-2, GeoCarb.

<https://eospsa.nasa.gov/missions/geostationary-carbon-cycle-observatory-evm-2>

Figure 15.26 Methane leak from space as detected by Earth Observing-1 (EO-1) satellite.

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/88245/imaging-a-methane-leak-from-space>

Figure 15.27 NASA Methane source model. <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2961/new-3d-view-of-methane-tracks-sources-and-movement-around-the-globe/>

Figure 15.28 Global methane emissions monitoring.

<https://www.ghgsat.com/>

Figure 15.29 Global-average radiative forcing estimates and ranges – AR5.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter08_FINAL.pdf

Figure 15.30 Collection of carbon tax and distribution of dividend to population.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_fee_and_dividend

Figure 16.1 Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide over the past 2000 years.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/greenhouse_gas_basics_e3148

Figure 16.2 Variation of Earth's temperature over the last two thousand years.

Figure 16.3 Global average temperature change since the beginning of the industrial period.

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/world-of-change/global-temperatures>

Figure 16.4 Ocean acidification.

<https://www.oceanacidification.org.uk/>

Figure 16.5 Buoys providing real-time data on ocean pH in north Pacific Ocean.

<https://www.pacioos.hawaii.edu/projects/acid/>

Figure 16.5 Changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide, Mauna Loa, Hawaii and pH of seawater of adjacent Station Aloha. <https://en.unesco.org/ocean-acidification>

Figure 16.6 Arctic region location maps.

<https://www.arcticcentre.org/EN/arcticregion/Maps/Sea-Ice>

Figure 16.7 Arctic air temperature October 31, 2020. Yellows and reds indicate higher than average temperatures and blues and purples indicate lower than average temperatures.

<http://nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/>

Figure 16.8 Satellite images of Arctic illustrating how sea cover changes from March to September. https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/sotc/sea_ice.html

Figure 16.9 Arctic sea ice extent by month to 2020. <http://polarportal.dk/en/sea-ice-and-icebergs/sea-ice-extent0/>

Figure 16.10 Arctic sea ice volume. <http://polarportal.dk/en/sea-ice-and-icebergs/sea-ice-thickness-and-volume/>

Figure 16.11 Arctic sea ice volume from analysis by Polar Science Center.

<http://psc.apl.uw.edu/research/projects/arctic-sea-ice-volume-anomaly/>

Figure 16.12 Albedo of open ocean, bare ice and snow cover in northern hemisphere.

<http://nsidc.org/cryosphere/snow/climate.html>

<https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/seaice/processes/albedo.html>

Figure 16.13 Permafrost areas in northern hemisphere.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0012825218305907>

Figure 16.14 Effect of increasing temperature on Arctic Infrastructure in Canada.

<http://www.global-greenhouse-warming.com/permafrost.html> and

<https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/the-north/science/permafrost-ice-snow/permafrost/10961>

Figure 16.15 Coastal erosion due to permafrost melt.

https://skepticalscience.com/The-speed-of-coastal-erosion-in-Eastern-Siberia_AWI.html

Figure 16.16 Northwest passage.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_claims_in_the_Arctic

Figure 16.17 Thawing of permafrost and release of carbon dioxide and methane.

<http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/project-pages/hydrates/>

December 12, 2020 – Fifth Anniversary of the Paris Agreement
Guide to the Science of Climate Change

Figure 16.18 Thawing of permafrost and release of carbon dioxide and methane.

<http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/project-pages/hydrates/>

Figure 16.19 Greenland location maps.

Figure 16.20 Melt water on the surface of Greenland ice sheet flowing into a moulin.

<https://scitechdaily.com/researchers-investigate-giant-holes-in-greenland-ice-sheet/>

Figure 16.21 Northeast Greenland Ice Stream (NEGIS) dividing into three glaciers which then flow into the ocean.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-04312-7>

Figure 16.22 Map showing Antarctica relative to South America, Australia and Africa.

Figure 16.23 Location of the ice shelves and stations on Antarctica.

Figure 16.24 Larson B and C ice shelves on the Antarctic Peninsula.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceberg_A-68

Figure 16.25 King penguin population on South Georgia Island about to be struck by iceberg A68a which had broken away from Larsen C ice shelf, Antarctica.

<https://www.ecowatch.com/south-georgia-island-iceberg-collision-2648621635.html?rebelltitem=1#rebelltitem1>

Figure 16.26 Territorial claims in Antarctic.

Figure 16.27 Global ocean heat content.

[file:///C:/Users/David%20Manz/Downloads/Cheng2020_Article_Record-SettingOceanWarmthConti%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/David%20Manz/Downloads/Cheng2020_Article_Record-SettingOceanWarmthConti%20(2).pdf)

Figure 16.28 Ocean heat budget with depth. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00376-020-9283-7>

Figure 16.29 Heat storage in the ocean 1950 to 2016.

Figure 16.30 Contribution to increases in sea level.

Figure 16.31 Impact of climate change on coral reef ecosystems.

<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coralreef-climate.html>

Figure 16.32 Droughts in California since 2000.

December 12, 2020 – Fifth Anniversary of the Paris Agreement
Guide to the Science of Climate Change

<https://www.drought.gov/drought/states/california>

Figure 16.33 Regions of the world vulnerable to desertification.

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/use/worldsoils/?cid=nrcs142p2_054003

Figure 16.34 Current global extinction risk in different species groups.

https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_en.pdf

Figure 16.35 Location of glaciers (shown in red) around the world.

<https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/glaciers/questions/located.html>

Figure 16.36 Melting glacier on Mount Kilimanjaro, Kenya.

Figure 16.36 Widespread impacts attributed to climate change based on the available scientific literature since the AR4. https://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_observedchanges.php and <https://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/index.php>

Figure 17.1 Subsystems included in climate models.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

Figure 17.2 Modelling concept used in atmosphere-ocean general circulation climate models, AOGCMs.

<https://www.climate.gov/maps-data/primer/climate-models>
<https://socom.princeton.edu/content/what-earth-system-model-esm>

Figure 17.3 Concept used in climate models showing vertical column extending into the oceans.

Figure 17.4 Comparison of grids used in climate models since they were first being developed for use in IPCC Assessment Report 1 to Assessment Report 5.

<https://scied.ucar.edu/longcontent/climate-modeling>
https://eo.ucar.edu/staff/russell/climate/modeling/climate_model_resolution.html

Figure 17.5 Computational elements used in climate models.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

Figure 17.6 Increase in climate model complexity since the 1970's.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

Figure 17.7 NASA Earth Observatory global maps. https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/global-maps?utm_campaign=nav20&utm_source=topnav&utm_medium=globalmaps

Figure 17.8 Assessment of global vegetative biomass capable of converting CO₂ to plant tissue using satellite carbon dioxide data. <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2436/co2-is-making-earth-greener-for-now/>

Figure 17.9 Ocean chlorophyll concentrations. https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/global-maps/MY1DMM_CHLORA

Figure 17.10 Land use including vegetation and type of vegetative cover. https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/LandCover/land_cover_3.php

Figure 17.11 Ice thickness. <https://icesat-2.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

Figure 17.12 Space weather satellite. <https://www.spaceweatherlive.com/en/news/view/399/20191209-welcome-goes-16.html>

Figure 17.13 GEDI instrument showing lasers, optical paths, detectors and digitizers. <https://gedi.umd.edu/instrument/instrument-overview/>

Figure 17.14 GEDI, shown in gold, as mounted on the International Space Station.

Figure 18.1 Representative concentration pathways or RPC's. Note that the name of the RPC; for example, RPC 8.5 refers to the radiative forcing in the year 2100. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-011-0148-z>

Figure 18.2 Climate change scenarios to be used in AR6. <https://climatescenarios.org/primer/mitigation/>

Figure 18.3 Observed and projected global surface temperature change 1850 – 2300. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.4 Observed and projected global surface and sea temperature change 1850 – 2100. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.5 projected annual mean surface air temperature change from 1986-2005 average. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.6 Historical and projected annual minimum of daily minimum, annual warmest daily of daily warmest, days of frost (below 0°C) and days of tropical nights (above 20°C). https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.7 Projected annual mean near-surface soil moisture change (2018-2100)
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.8 Projected annual mean runoff change (2018-2100).
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.9 Observed and projected world surface and sea precipitation change 1850 – 2100.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.10 Observed and projected global surface and sea evaporation change 2081-2100.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.11 Sea ice extent northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere for February and September observed and projected.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.12 Sea ice concentrations for Arctic and Antarctic, 1986-2005 average, projected for February and September using RCP4.5 and 8.5.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.13 Snow cover extent range, historical and projected to 2100.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.14 Near-surface permafrost area, historical and projected to 2100.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.15 projected global sea level rise.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter13_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.16 (a) Simulated changes in dissolved O₂ (mean and model range as shading) relative to 1990s for RCP2.6, RCP4.5, RCP6.0 and RCP8.5. (b) Multi-model means dissolved O₂ (μmol m⁻³) in the main thermocline (200 to 600 m depth average) for the 1990s, and changes in 2090s relative to 1990s for RCP2.6 (c) and RCP8.5 (d). To indicate consistency in the sign of change, regions are stippled where at least 80% of models agree on the sign of the mean change.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter06_FINAL.pdf

Figure 18.17 Historical and projected pH and dissolved CO₂.
<https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/pubs/PDF/feel2899/feel2899.pdf>

Figure 18.18 Past and future changes to the ocean and cryosphere. <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>

Figure 18.19 Climate change and the jet stream.
<http://www.climatecentral.org/gallery/graphics/climate-change-the-jet-stream>

December 12, 2020 – Fifth Anniversary of the Paris Agreement
Guide to the Science of Climate Change

Figure 18.20 Annex 1 AR5 WG1 Atlas of global and regional climate projections.
<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

Figure 19.1 Current global extinction risk in different species groups.
https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_en.pdf

Figure 19.2 Maximum speed at which species can move.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf

Figure 20.1 Energy budget as affected by humans.

Figure 20.2 Hydrological cycle. http://www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/5c_1.html

Figure 20.3 Carbon Cycle. (Office of Biological and Environmental Research of the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science).

Figure 20.4 Observed and projected global surface temperature change 1850 – 2300.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Figure 20.5 Representative concentration pathways or RPC's. Note that the name of the RPC; for example, RPC 8.5 refers to the radiative forcing in the year 2100. (See Strategies for mitigation of climate change: a review.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-011-0148-z>)

Figure 20.6 Greenhouse gas emissions to achieve the RCP outcomes.
<https://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/climate-campus/modelling-and-projections/projecting-future-climate/greenhouse-gas-scenarios/>

Figure 20.7 (also Figure 15.9) Detailed global emissions by sector.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter1.pdf

Figure 21.1 Climate change scenarios to be used in AR6.
<https://climatescenarios.org/primer/mitigation/>

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Summary of table of contents.

Table 1.2 United Nations sustainable development goals.

Table 4.1 Forms of energy taken from <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/what-is-energy/>

Table 9.1 Meteorological seasons in temperate latitudes in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Table 9.2 Astronomical seasons in temperate latitudes in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Table 9.3 Meteorological tropical seasons.

Table 10.1 Effect of ENSO on tropical cyclones.

Table 10.2 Classifications of tropical cyclones.

Table 10.3 Size description of tropical cyclones.

Table 11.1 Effect of ENSO on tropical cyclones.

Table 13.1 Partial list of paleoclimatic proxies and the information that can be obtained/extracted. These proxies provide age and climate information.

Table 13.2 Partial list of paleoclimatic proxies and the information that can be obtained/extracted. These proxies provide age or climate information but not both.

Table 13.3 Known ice ages.

Table 14.1 Data products available from NASA, Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer, MODIS. <https://modis.gsfc.nasa.gov/data/dataproduct/index.php>

Table 15.1 Global warming potential and atmospheric lifetime for major greenhouse gases. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar4/wg1/>

Table 15.2 Energy density of different fuels. https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Energy_density

Table 15.3 Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by fuel type.

https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/co2_vol_mass.php
and <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=73&t=11>

Table 15.4 Natural sources of methane.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methane_emissions#Natural

Table 15.5 Anthropogenic sources of methane.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methane_emissions#Natural

Table 17.1 Comparison of AOGMs and ESMs, CMIP5. <https://pcmdi.llnl.gov/index.html> and
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter09_FINAL.pdf

Table 17.2 Comparison of AOGMs and ESMs, CMIP3. <https://pcmdi.llnl.gov/index.html> and
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter09_FINAL.pdf

Table 17.3 Comparison of EMICs. <https://pcmdi.llnl.gov/index.html> and
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter09_FINAL.pdf

Table 17.4 Confidence terminology used in IPCC reports.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2017/08/AR5_Uncertainty_Guidance_Note.pdf

Table 17.5 Agreement-evidence scale used in IPCC reports to aid in use of confidence descriptors.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2017/08/AR5_Uncertainty_Guidance_Note.pdf

Table 17.6 Likelihood terminology used in IPCC reports.

Table 17.7 Method for IPCC usage of calibrated language.

Table 18.1 Description of representative concentration pathways RCP along with associated integrated assessment model, IAM.

Table 18.2 AR5 Percentage of CMIP5 models for which the projected change in global mean surface air temperature, relative to 1850-1900, crosses the specified temperature levels, by the specified time periods and assuming the specified RCP scenarios. From Table 11.3.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter11_FINAL.pdf

Table 18.3 CMIP5 annual mean surface air temperature anomalies (°C) from the 1986–2005 reference period for selected time periods, regions and RCPs. From Table 12.2.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Table 18.4 CMIP5 global annual mean temperature changes above 1850-1900 for the 2081–2100 period of each RCP scenario. From Table 12.3.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter12_FINAL.pdf

Table 18.5 Summary of the relevance of projected changes in major phenomena for mean change in regional climate.

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter14_FINAL.pdf

Table 21.1 Description of Shared Socio-economic Pathways (SSPs) taken from Summary for Policymakers, Special Report Climate Change and Land. <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>

Table 21.2 Shared socio-economic pathways explained in Special Report Global Warming of 1.5°C. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_Chapter2_Low_Res.pdf