

# EcoLogic

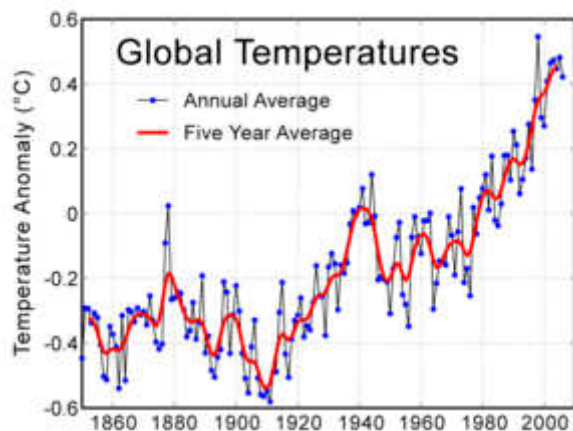
- the green hornet

## What is Global Warming and is it real?

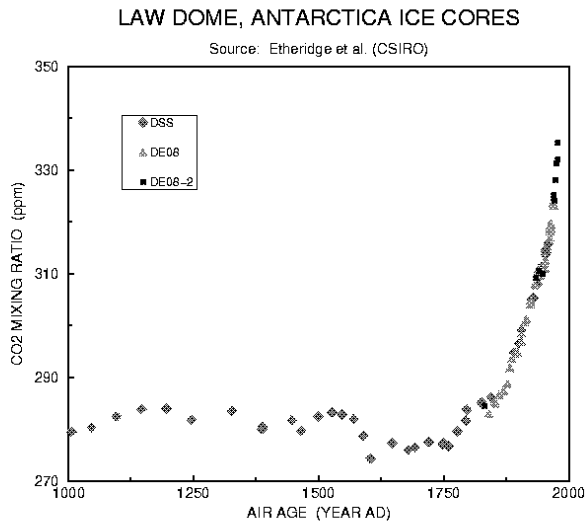
As mentioned in prior articles, the term 'global warming' pertains to the idea that the earth seems to be getting warmer. Further, the thought is that this global warming is as a result of greenhouse gasses emitted by man and his contraptions.

These anthropogenic (man made as opposed to coming from natural sources) gasses include carbon dioxide, water vapor, methane, nitrous oxides and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). What these nitrous oxides and the other gases do is to trap heat within the Earth's atmosphere causing the temperature to rise. Most of the scientific societies and academies subscribe to this belief; however there is still a question in the minds of some individual scientists that global warming is, in fact, a fact.

The graph below does illustrate that the trend of the temperature of the earth seems to be on the rise over the past 140+ years. If you look at a graph of the stock market, you will notice that over the life of the market, it is also rising. The difference though is that the stock market has a very definite beginning and the origin of the climate graph is somewhat arbitrary. So, in other words this increase in temperature could just be a 'short term' blip' in the context of a much grander time scale.



Other data do suggest a positive correlation between an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels and temperature over a much longer time frame. Since CO<sub>2</sub> is defined as a greenhouse gas the intimation is that CO<sub>2</sub> is the cause of the temperature increases. This was pointed out in Al Gore's Academy and Nobel Award winning Inconvenient Truth Power Point presentation.



It is recognized that the earth does go through periodic heating and cooling phases and the countervailing attitude puts any responsibility for any global average temperature fluctuations squarely on the shoulders of Mother Nature. Again, this appears to be a minority viewpoint so the prevailing position is to aggressively reduce the quantity of manmade pollutants thereby minimizing our impact on the environment.

What can be acknowledged though is that our earth is a supremely complex system and nothing conclusive may ever be positively determined about cause and effect regarding climate change and man's place in it. But, again, it seems that the sheer quantity of us humans must have some sort of consequence on our home planet even if we didn't have any combustion machines.

Further, even our green efforts can have deleterious affects just by virtue of scale. It was noted that the increase demand in ethanol, to reduce the burning of fossil fuels, has produced a 7,500 square mile dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico because of the nutrient run-off from the increasing size and number of corn growing fields. So we need to be measured and prudent about our initiatives and reactions or we could have an iatrogenic issue (the cure is worse than the disease).

James Lovelock, the guy who originated the notion of Gaia, says it's already too late; the warming trend is irreversible. That's an awfully grim thought and I'd hate to think there's nothing we could do. Fortunately most people are willing to try something, so there is a groundswell of urgency to protect the ecosystem. After all, this environmental stuff seems to have galvanized the people of earth with a common cause; it's the next best thing to an invasion from Mars. So until those space invaders land, and while it still seems safe and practical to do so, let's keep recycling!