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EDITOR'S WELCOME



The Pulse of the Planet

By Kira Coley, Senior Editor

or centuries, the polar regions were too remote, too cold and too treacherous for humans—only the bravest explorer would risk an expedition, often proving near-fatal. These days, though, even the ever-changing and increasingly dangerous melting landscape will not deter an adventure-seeking tourist. Scientist or not, many are eager to endure freezing conditions to witness the inimitable frozen cliffs and ice-clad vistas unique to the Arctic and Antarctic regions. In fact, polar travellers now outnumber Antarctic scientists 10:1, with nearly 59,367 visitors landing in the 2019/2020 season.

Russian Scientist and Polar Explorer, Victor Boyarsky, once said that the South Pole was like visiting Disneyland, Las Vegas, and Mars simultaneously. But unlike Vegas, what happens at the poles doesn't stay at the poles. Although remote, the Arctic and Antarctic are intricately connected to the rest of the planet. Every year, the ice encapsulating Earth's polar regions expand and contract—an icy 'heartbeat' contributing freshwater and nutrients to the ocean ecosystem and influencing sea levels, weather, and climate conditions around the world.

As thousands flock to the poles each year on holiday, conducting science here is still fraught with challenges. "Carrying out research in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean is a global endeavor. With an area greater than that of the United States and Mexico combined, Antarctica is so vast and inaccessible that no individual nation can alone unlock its secrets," writes the **Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).** The importance of unlocking the secrets of the Arctic Ocean, Antarctica and the Alpine regions (considered the 3rd pole) pushes scientists to find new ways to obtain data; be it via innovative technology, citizen science, or new cross-sector collaborations that edge us closer to the data needed to safeguard our future.

We wanted to showcase some of this vital research and technological advancements underway today. As such, ECO Magazine has partnered with SCAR, the Arctic Circle Assembly, and the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) to bring you our second Special Edition of 2020: Polar Research and Exploration. Within this 144-page digital exclusive, we share the latest research investigating Life Above & Below the Ice, Polar Environments, Innovation in Frozen Seas and Humans at the Poles. Each story offers a glimpse into the recent knowledge gained—and that is still needed—in predicting the rate of melting ice-sheets and sea-level rise; the effects of climate change on biodiversity in these regions; and the heroic efforts of polar scientists as they search for the answers to some of the most important and pressing questions of our time.

The world will continue to monitor the pulse of the planet through the annual expansion and contraction of ice in the polar regions—a pulse that is weakening as the ice melts.

Thank you to the sponsors of this special edition for helping us spread awareness about these important polar issues, and for supporting the contributing scientists and industry members in their efforts to advance our knowledge in the field.

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