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Did You Know?

Each year, factories in North America produce about 3 million tons of harmful chemicals. These chemicals enter our air, water, and soil.

Key Terms

acid rain—rain that is harmful because it is mixed with polluted air

extinct—no longer alive

ozone layer—a part of the atmosphere that takes out some of the sun's harmful rays

pollution—something that harms the air, water, or soil

Our planet is home to billions and billions of plants and animals. Living things need air and water to survive. They also need a place to live. This is their—and our—environment.

Pollution Threatens

Some disasters threaten our environment. Many are the result of pollution. Modern life produces a lot of wastes. We throw away garbage bags full of trash. A lot of this ends up in large dumps.

Water pollution kills fish and other animals. It can also make water unsafe to drink.

Fumes from cars pollute the air. Air pollution causes health problems for many people. It can also reduce the ozone layer high in Earth's atmosphere.

The ozone layer filters out some of the sun's harmful rays. Without this protection, more people may die of deadly skin cancers.

Air pollution also causes acid rain. Polluted air mixes with rain as it falls to the ground. Acid rain is a serious problem all over the world. It kills plants and animals.

Many species are becoming extinct because of acid rain. Acid rain also pollutes lakes. The fish in those lakes die. Acid rain can even wear away some old buildings.

We use wood to build homes and furniture. People also use wood to heat their homes. A lot of the world's paper supplies come from wood. That's a lot of trees! But forests are disappearing. Many species of rainforest plants and animals are becoming extinct.