

## **A Geographer's Perspective on the Environment**

The course this fall will focus on the environment, but from the perspective of a geographer. I am not an environmental scientist. The first four sessions will cover:

1. The world's climate along with climate changes
2. Water on the land
3. The impact of settlements and people on their environments
4. The health and value of the oceans

These four sessions have a logical progression as water travels from the oceans to the land and back to the oceans again. We shall start with how this transfer, the first part of the hydrological cycle, takes place concentrating on climate, climate change, and changing sea levels. In session 2, we'll see how, as moisture moves onshore, it provides potentially clean water for drinking, irrigates our crops and natural vegetation, enables transport and recreation, and of course, provides water for power and industries. In session 3, we shall see that, sadly, some of the river transport back to the oceans is of polluting chemicals and garbage, particularly plastics these days. We shall look at how settlements and land use impact our water supplies and our environment and what we can do about it. In session 4, we will arrive back at the oceans and will look at them as a source of fish, wild life, and tourism. None of these sessions will be all theory, and they will be fully illustrated with case studies from around the world.

I will stress how interconnected everything is. Our plastic can end up in someone else's ocean. Our use of fossil fuels may cause warming of the atmosphere leading to sea level rise that threatens low-lying tropical islands. Some chemicals used to control weeds in our agriculture cause bees and butterflies to die off, affecting food supplies as well as flowers in our gardens. Some countries ban these chemicals and others do not. We can, and should, learn from each other.

Sessions 5, 6 and 7 will be entirely case study based covering topics that may have been missed from earlier sessions such as the impact of tourism, both good and bad, on the environment. Other topics could include the importance of national parks and preserved wild spaces, the management of forests for the well-being of all, the worrying increase in devastating wildfires, the damage to coral reefs of warmer seas and increased pollution, and more positively, the return of the beavers. We will look at how countries outside of the US are coping with the same issues of environmental degradation. We shall also look at the impact of large cities and the still increasing world population.

I welcome the input of the group and will be open to suggestions as to topics, particularly for the last three sessions. However, this is not a discussion group, it is a lecture course where, in the absence of text books, I make use of power point to show photos, tables and maps. The two hour session will be broken up by a 15 minute break.

**Leader:** Helen Goddard is a former geography teacher in the United Kingdom.

**Wednesdays:** 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., 7 weeks: September 26 through November 7

**Location:** PSRC