

# Study: Climate change may help redwoods

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Climate change is melting glaciers, worsening droughts and raising sea levels around the world.

But when it comes to redwood trees – the ancient, iconic sentinels that scientists have worried may be at risk as the planet heats up – global warming may actually be helping, at least for now, according to research released Wednesday.

“We’re not seeing any evidence of declining growth rates,” said Steve Sillett, a forestry professor at Humboldt State and nationally known redwoods expert. “In fact, a lot of the sites are exhibiting increasing rates of growth over the last 100 years.”

It may be that the trees prefer warmer temperatures, or that they are benefiting from more sunlight, a longer growing season or even decades of fire suppression. Or they might even be responding well to higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Nobody knows yet.

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But Sillett and other researchers working on an ambitious, four-year study found that growth rates of coastal redwoods and giant sequoia trees in California’s old-growth forests increased during the 20th century, even as other parts of the Earth’s environment – from polar bears to coral reefs – suffered from climate change.