

Study: Tropics threatened by global warming

By Neela Banerjee, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Polar bears and penguins are usually the first creatures that come to mind when considering the likely victims of global warming, but a new study finds that fish, coral and other inhabitants of the tropics will be the first to take the brunt of climate change.

An analysis of global temperatures over the last 150 years combined with forecasts generated by 39 independent models concludes that animals in areas closest to the equator will be forced to cope with temperatures that are outside their historical range in as little as about 15 years.

Although organisms all over the world will have to find ways to adapt to higher temperatures, animals in the tropics are particularly vulnerable, researchers said. Conditions in the tropics stay in a narrower range than in other places on the planet, so it takes a smaller shift to put creatures in peril, said biologist Eric Post, director of the Polar Center at Penn State.

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