

Suburban ecosystems to be studied

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U.S. researchers are studying the ecosystems of the suburban enclave to determine the effects of lawns in global warming.

"The suburban landscape is large, and it's growing," said Jennifer Jenkins of the University of Vermont, one of the scientists reporting their findings this week at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco. "There's this enormous land surface that's falling through the cracks."

Jenkins said forests, wetlands, bogs, rainforests and deserts have had the brunt of scientific study, the suburbs have a big impact from its use of pesticides and fertilizers as well as water runoff, the San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News reported Friday.

Researchers will clip plots of lawn by hand, analyze the clippings to determine how much carbon dioxide the lawns absorb and give off, and whether they're contributing to global warming or slowing it down.

Suburbia's is probably the biggest threat to the diversity of wildlife in the developed world, according to a 2003 review by Stephen DeStefano of the U.S. Geological Survey and Richard DeGraaf of the U.S. Forest Service.

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