

# Google opens online window on toll of climate change

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Polar Bears International borrowed Street View Trekker 360-degree camera and location-pinpointing gear to enhance maps with scenes of polar bears in Manitoba, like these pictured on November 13, 2007, as the sea ice on which they depend vanishes

As world leaders gathered in Paris on Monday in the hope of stopping catastrophic climate change, Google Maps provided online views of remote locations where wildlife is struggling for survival.

A "Street View" feature at the free online map service has grown from simply showing scenes outside of business or residential addresses to allowing arm chair adventurers to virtually explore mountains, rain forests, ocean depths and more.

Some settings find creatures in dire straits, such as polar bear in the Canadian Arctic appearing to desperately wait for bay ice that doesn't form because temperatures are too warm.

"From [polar bears](#) in the Canadian Arctic, to communities in the Brazilian Amazon, to blue oak trees in Central California, the impacts of climate change are being felt by plants, animals and people across the planet," said Google Earth outreach program manager Karin Tuxen-Bettman.

"With Street View, you can get a window into some of our world's changing ecosystems, and learn how nonprofit and other organizations are working to keep our planet healthy."

Polar Bears International (PBI) borrowed Street View Trekker 360-degree camera and location-pinpointing gear to enhance maps with scenes of polar bears in Manitoba as the sea ice on which they depend vanishes.



Street View cars will begin measuring more pollutants, such as climate change culprit carbon dioxide, in an alliance with environmental sensor network specialty firm Aclima

PBI incorporated the Street View scenes into its website and a lesson plan for schools to help children learn about the habitat.

Brazilian nonprofit Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS) used Trekker Gear to capture scenes in the Amazon forest and put isolated local communities on the map.

FAS captured imagery from three reserves in the Amazon and uses it for education about rain forest protection and sustainable ecosystem management, according to Google.

## **Visualizing climate change**

The initiative aims to make climate change more real for people and inspire them to act by allowing them to virtually explore remote areas, and see beauty lost or under threat due to climate change.

Street View imagery also allows for comparisons over time to show how environments are changing along with the climate.

"Street View is great for visualizing the impacts of climate change, but we're also using our Street View platform to measure climate data, which can be used by scientists, policymakers, businesses and citizens to drive better decisions," Tuxen-Bettman said.

Google Earth has worked for several years with the Environmental Defense Fund to map methane leaks from natural gas lines under an array of US cities by equipping Street View cars with special gear, according to Tuxen-Bettman.

Street View cars will begin measuring more pollutants, such as [climate change](#) culprit carbon dioxide, in an alliance with environmental sensor network specialty firm Aclima, according to California-based Google.

"Essentially, we're turning Street View cars into environmental sensing platforms," Tuxen-Bettman said, noting that they will first be put to work in California communities.

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