

<http://www.sciencenews.org/view/feature/id/39423>Home / January 3rd, 2009; Vol.175 #1 / [Feature](#)**SCIENCE & SOCIETY: NEWS OF THE YEAR, 2008**

**Science News writers and editors looked back at the past year's stories and selected a handful as the year's most interesting and important in the interface of Science & Society. Follow hotlinks to the full, original stories.**

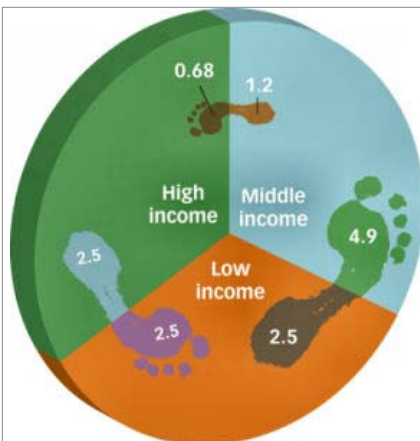
By [Science News Staff](#)

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**Polar bears listed as threatened**

Climate disruption cited as main threat to Arctic creature

The polar bear made it onto the U.S. endangered species list in the “threatened” category in May after several years of legal and scientific drama (*SN Online*: 5/14/08). Listings for corals mention climate change as a contributing peril, but the bear became the first species listed with climate change as the main threat. Polar bears are adapted to life on sea ice, and in 2007, the U.S. Geological Survey calculated that current climate models predict that by midcentury melting in the Arctic will reduce the current polar bear population by two-thirds.



**Big foot**

Rich nations are leaving supersized boot prints of ecological damage on poor countries. In the past four decades, the rich have passed up to \$2.5 trillion in environmental damage onto the poor, eclipsing the poor nations' debt of \$1.8 trillion to wealthier countries (*SN*: 1/26/08, p. 52).

**Return of the libraries** After facing strong political opposition, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency agrees to reopen a number of the libraries that its staff and the public had depended on as a source of reports not available elsewhere (*SN Online*: 4/25/08).

**Scientific interference** A survey of Environmental Protection Agency scientists finds most had experienced political interference during the past five years, such as being told to bury or misrepresent research data that might contradict Bush administration policies (*SN Online*: 5/8/08).

**Burying bad news** By relying on journals, physicians and the public alike are getting a skewed picture of drug and therapy trials. In one study, researchers find that data from fewer than one in five research trials are ever published (*SN Online*: 9/24/08). Another study shows that results of drug trials are often unreported and inaccessible to clinicians and patients (*SN*: 12/20/08, p. 14).



**Meat not miles** Reducing red meat and dairy intake lowers food-associated greenhouse gas emissions more than reducing food miles by buying local goods, suggests a food life-cycles analysis (*SN*: 5/24/08, p. 11).

**Early thaws** In New Hampshire, the trend toward earlier spring thaws has significantly lowered logging revenues (*SN*: 1/5/08, p. 14).

**Anthrax details** The FBI reports that DNA analyses of the anthrax sent by mail in the 2001 attacks revealed four signature mutations that were key in implicating Bruce Ivins. The Army microbiologist died of an apparent suicide in July while under investigation (*SN*: 9/13/08, p. 8).