

Watchful eyes

Space satellites monitor Earth

Satellites observe large swathes of the planet in one go, allowing us to see the big picture and learn things we simply couldn't from ground level.

Satellites help us detect forest fires, track migrating endangered species and manage water supplies. They help us monitor retreating ice sheets, expanding urban sprawl and shrinking rainforests. Air pollution levels over our cities are being measured, and high-resolution 3D satellite maps of the Great Barrier Reef are being used to decide the best way to preserve this dwindling natural spectacle.

In the wake of natural disasters, satellite images are crucial for medical aid workers to deploy their resources to the right areas. In the recent response to Ebola in West Africa, volunteers used satellite images to draw maps so that epidemiologists could chart the spread of the disease.

When it comes to combating climate change, satellites have a vital role to play too. They can measure a range of things from carbon dioxide levels to ocean circulation and acidification. In 2007, satellites revealed the lowest ice coverage ever recorded in the Arctic.



Satellite overlooking Earth as part of the US Defense Meteorological Satellite Program

US Air Force/Flickr

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

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