

Going Fishing in a Warming World

Professional Fishing Boat Captain Brings Presentation to Columbia



Professional angler and charter boat captain Dan Kipnis of Miami Beach (center) speaks in Columbia about the effects of global warming on fishing as Ben Gregg, director of the SC Wildlife Federation, watches. *Photo by Eric Ward*

Global warming could put a plague-like twist on the old saying “gone fishin’.”

As in, the fish are gone.

It’s already happening in some parts.

“Died, dead, gone,” professional angler and charter boat captain Dan Kipnis of Miami Beach said during a presentation Aug. 22 in Columbia. Kipnis was referring to trout in north Georgia. “They gotta bring ‘em back and stock ‘em,” he said animatedly.

Why?

Because climate change has raised the temperature of the trout’s native waters in the upper part of the Peach State to levels the trout don’t fare well in, Kipnis explained.

His talk focused on the effects of global warming on fishing. Using PowerPoint slides and holding a miniature blue and green Earth globe, Kipnis spoke during a luncheon at the Palmetto Club downtown.

It was an oppressively hot, humid day during a scorching August that broke some warm-weather records locally and statewide and threatened others. “It’s a perfect time for me to come and talk about climate change after what you’ve been going through,” Kipnis said, describing himself as a boat captain not a scientist.

He donned brown khakis; a black, olive green, tan and cream-colored Hawaiian-style shirt; brown crocs; and a straw hat with his whitish hair in a ponytail for his presentation, which environmental groups sponsored. Some of their representatives attended as did state Sen. John Courson, R-Richland, and two emissaries of Gov. Mark Sanford.

The slides Kipnis showed depicted magnificent ocean life, from fearsome predators such as billfish — threatened by disruptions in their food supply down the chain — to passive coral reefs in the deepest beautiful hues of the rainbow — until being bleached by their color-giving algae departing because of rising water temperatures.

Warming and acidification, as a result of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, are the biggest climate change threats to the oceans, Kipnis said.

Ocean water absorbs acidic air compounds normally, he said. “What we’ve done is fill it up, so much so that it’s having a hard time taking it in.” And marine life, while capable of adapting, cannot adjust to the shifting ocean conditions as rapidly as the changes are occurring, Kipnis said.

Cary Chamblee, lobbyist for and interim director of the South Carolina Sierra Club, began the event by blessing the lunch and thanking God for the opportunity to learn about ways to protect natural resources.

Kipnis said those ways include using and recycling energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs; paying bills online to reduce paper consumption; bringing one’s own bags when shopping; and patronizing green companies. “Once you start thinking about these things it will change your life,” he said.