PRAY FOR SNOW!

THE COLLAPSE OF MASSIVE POLAR ICE SHEETS MAY MAKE HEADLINES BUT, AS THE WORLD WARMS, MORE SUBTLE CHANGES ARE AFOOT. SNOW THICKNESS IS DECLINING ON MOUNTAIN RANGES EVERYWHERE, WITH SNOWFALLS STARTING LATER AND ENDING EARLIER EACH YEAR. THE ALPS, MAIN RECIPIENT OF SNOW FOR THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT, WERE WARMER IN 1994, 2000, 2002 AND 2003 THAN THEY HAVE EVER BEEN IN 500 YEARS! PRAYING FOR SNOW MAY NOT BE ENOUGH, BUT THANKFULLY THERE ARE SIGNS THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO DO THEIR BIT…

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Levels of CO_2 have risen 40% since the industrial revolution.
In that time, average world temperatures have risen steadily.

Bolivia's Chacaltaya used to be the world's highest ski resort.
The glacier has lost 80% of its volume in the past 20 years.
It melted completely in 2009, six years earlier than predicted.
Snow will never return as the sun heats the exposed rock face.

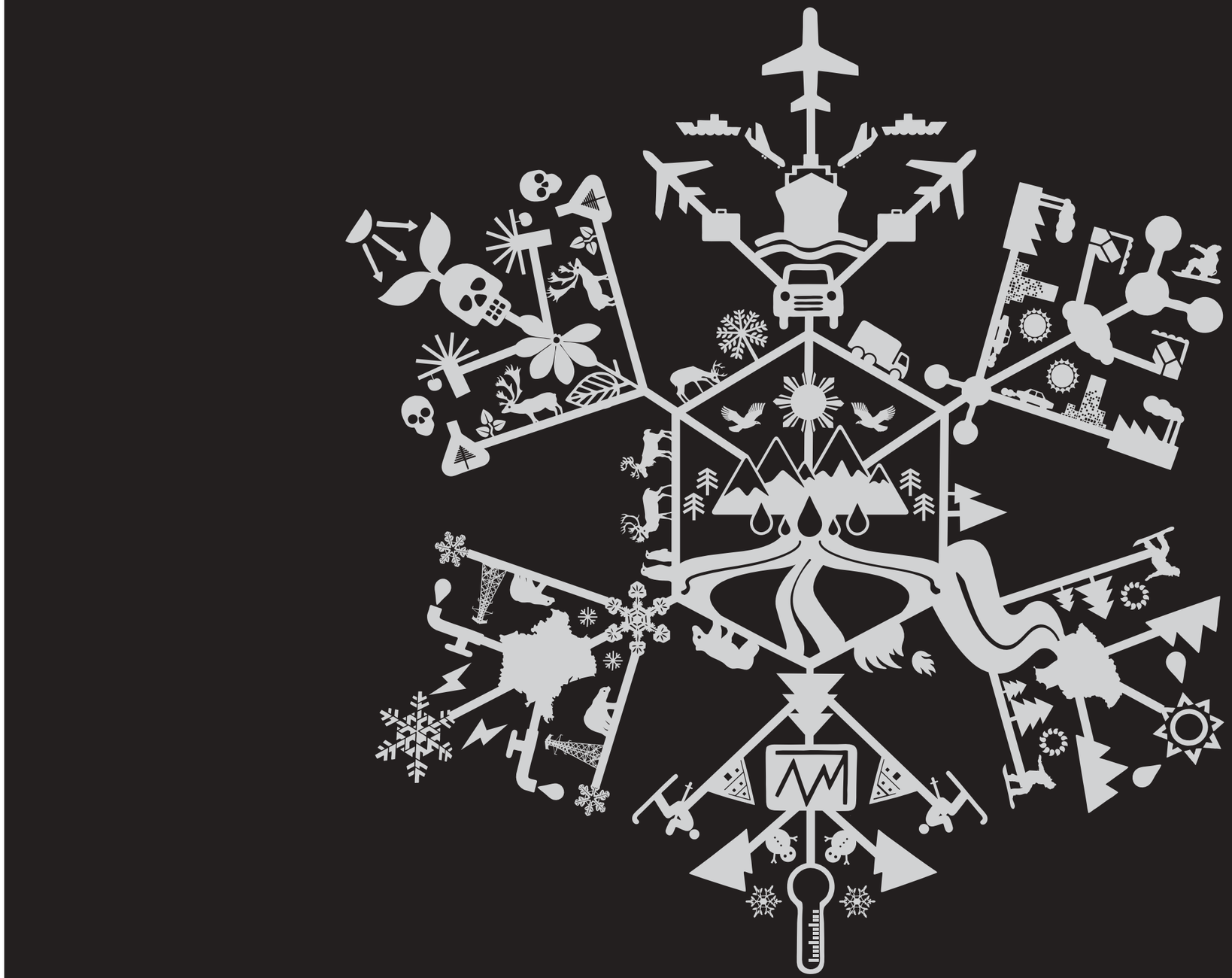
A 1°C rise in temperature could reduce reliable skiing areas in Germany by 60%.
Winter sports are vital to many local economies.

In 2005, 18% of the total skiing area in France was covered by artificial snow.
Covering just 1 hectare uses 4000m³ of water and 25,000kWh of electricity.
Snow-making can cause serious water shortages in surrounding valleys.

Loss of snowpack destroys mountain ecosystems.
Plants are killed by exposure to frost and direct sunlight.
In 100 years, 80% of New Zealand's mountain plant cover may be lost.
This could cause 200-300 native alpine species to become extinct.

Himalayan ice masses feed the nine largest rivers in Asia.
What happens at mountain-tops affects whole valleys.
Reduced snowfall causes drought in major rivers.

Mountain sport organisations the world over are worried.
Campaigns like Respect the Mountain and Sustainable Slopes are raising awareness.
To save our snow, we need to keep political pressure up.
The most polluting part of a trip to the snow is travel – don't fly.
Aspen has raised $1,400,000 in 12 years for small eco projects.
Laax in Switzerland burns local wood waste to heat its 1,000-bed resort.



SOURCES: ***NOAA Earth Systems Research Laboratory:*** http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/, ***COP15 news report:*** http://en.cop15.dk/news/view+news?newsid=1831, ***OECD:*** http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_201185_37825494_1_1_1_1,00.html, ***Pistehors:*** http://pistehors.com/news/ski/comments,/0685-ski-resorts-unite-to-save-the-planet,/), ***Climate-Change Effects on Alpine Plant Biodiversity:*** A New Zealand Perspective on Quantifying the Threat' Stephan R. P. Halloy and Alan F. Mark in Arctic, Antarctic, and Alpine Research 35(2):248-254. (2003), ***The World Bank:*** http://beta.worldbank.org/climatechange/news/kathmandu-copenhagen-regional-climate-change-conference), ***Ski Club of Great Britain:*** http://www.skiclub.co.uk/skiclub/respectthemountain/default.aspx, ***National Ski Areas Association:*** http://www.nsaa.org/nsaa/environment/sustainable_slopes/