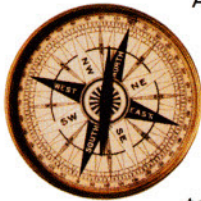


Did you know that our Planets **Magnetic North Pole** is moving a lot quicker than in the past.

G E O G R A P H Y

The Vaulting Pole



All compasses point to the north magnetic pole—but it might be time to trade that trusty compass for a handheld GPS. The north magnetic pole, unlike the stable geographic pole around which the planet spins, is hightailing it toward Siberia at a clip of 25 miles a year. Generated by movement of liquid iron coursing through Earth's outer core, the north magnetic pole has moved some 700 miles since its discovery in 1831. Oregon State University paleomagnetist Joseph Stoner's analysis of magnetic minerals in Arctic lake beds indicates that today's polar speeds are faster than any since the 15th century. The most notable impact of its wandering is likely to be on the pole's colorful halo, the aurora borealis, which may soon be more visible in Russia than Alaska. "A hundred years ago this movement could have been a major problem for navigation," Stoner says. "Now it's a minor inconvenience." —*Joel K. Bourne, Jr.*

