



A World in Crisis: A Test of Survival

Description

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Memo

I worry about survival. Bluntly put, according to the Academy of Sciences almost every person on earth will be affected by climate change. I believe it is something we've known for many years but have largely ignored or disagreed over the validity of the prediction. I am concerned about generations to come and whether my children, grandchildren, and their children will flourish in a world of wonder, worthy of care and protection as have thousands of generations before me.

Meanwhile, unless well-intended words are transformed into action, farm workers, for example, in open fields, would suffer under high temperature conditions finding it difficult to work for any length of time or perhaps at all. This in turn affects not only the farm workers but the crops and food supply. In addition, pesticides when sprayed on fields release compounds into the atmosphere that have damaging effects on the ozone. Each of these events have a domino effect. In my own community, there are proposals to protect against rising tides for people who live along the coast. Warming waters have caused dying coral reefs, while the spread of urban development affects not only lower income communities but the habitats and feeding sources of animals and birds.

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As individuals, we look for things we can do to help. I support non-profit organizations that have reach and resources that individuals don't have. They focus on the long-term effects of climate change on the

planet. As watch dogs they are able to file and win court cases preventing projects that are harmful to the environment such as drilling for off-shore oil in Alaska or the Keystone pipeline. At home, we recycle, volunteer to clean-up along shores, lakes, oceans, and rivers littered with trash. There are habitat and wetlands restoration projects by groups such as the local Audubon Society.

I'm fortunate to live in a community and a state that is very aware of the effects of climate change. Rules and regulations are imposed on the lumber industry to restrict clear-cutting forests so vital to clean air. Electric vehicles and wind-powered energy is encouraged, supported and planned for. I'm very aware of the threat of extinction to not only the planet and human life but to thousands of animal and plant species.

As a birder for many years, it's taught me how to watch carefully, observe, note behavior and changes. I see the reduction of species in old familiar birding habitats as well as the effects of drought causing starvation and the migration of populations in search of food. These are the things I often write about and comment on: the politics and influence of interest groups who specialize in maintaining the status quo and their bottom line despite harm to the environment. It is my hope that joining my voice to others will make a difference, that together we'll be able to implement sustainable solutions. Attention must be paid before it's too late!

The AutoEthnographer





By Peter Burdon for Unsplash

A Cautionary Tale

Clearer skies, cleaner air,
the constant urban drone replaced
by bird song and whisper of wind.
Earth given breathing space
as we sheltered in place.
Washed our hands masked our face.
Kept our distance. Safe, we hoped,
from a voracious virus.

But it didn't last—

A restless public confused
by policy and politics, appeal for help.
Business comes to a near halt.
Unemployed seek food to feed families,
relief from rent and mortgage.
The rebellious boosted by bluster
mingle in crowded spaces, unmasked
while an unbound virus roams.

Urban decibels rise, pollution levels too.
Carbon emissions foul air.
Climate extremes play havoc
with hurricanes, floods, wildfires.

Mother nature is telling us something.
When will we listen?

Message

Aristotle's disciple, Theophratus,
sent a message in a bottle proving
the Atlantic flowed into the Mediterranean.
Shipwrecked sailors sent messages
arriving too late for rescue.

Now from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch
castaway plastic bottles send messages
in languages foreign and domestic.
Societies' discards funneled from rivers,

storm drains and ships at sea,
trapped in a confluence of currents,
a twice Texas-size gyre of debris:

a stuffed bear, a lawn chair, toothbrushes,
plastic ware broken by sun and wind,
confetti-like particles, ingested,
mistaken for plankton;
chemical sludge passed in a chain
lantern fish to jellyfish to serving dish.

Whale bellies fill with fishing line,
sea lions strangle in trawl,
albatross choke,
cry for rescue from the vortex
before we're all down the drain.

Elements

Fueled by gusting winds fire rages over field
and forest leaving behind charred crops, destroyed
homes, animals, and those unable to escape.

Savage storms, flash floods, mudslides follow:
a child separated from his father, swept away—
found at the bottom of the slide
plastered in mud, but alive—
a great-grandmother, her two grandchildren
wrapped in wet blankets don't survive.

From dryness to drought, scorched acres,
90 degree heat near the Artic Circle,
Climate change may be slow until it's terrifyingly fast.
And the debate drags on.

Safe, stretched out on a comfortable couch,
I watch my son-in-law try to rescue a lizard
that slipped in with wood for the evening fire.

Under logs banked on the hearth
they play a slithery game of hide and seek—
the lizard wins.
His fate as unknown as ours.





by Matt Palmer for Unsplash

Listen to Mother N.

Good advice. She's older, wiser, with something to say.
Step back. Give earth breathing space.
Take *shelter-in-place*.

Cleaner air, fewer cars, our carbon footprint smaller.
Skies near empty of jet streams, urban hum gone.
Stars shine brighter at night. Bird song more robust by day.

Rome, New Delhi, Los Angeles, less smog-choked.
Snow-capped Himalayan peaks visible again.

The earth turns wilder. Coyotes, deer, roam city streets.
In India bold monkeys enter homes, open refrigerators.
Goats take over a town in Wales.

In Italy they sing through open windows and doors
while we howl and dogs join in.

Answer the Call

Rome may not be burning—
but fires raze acres of Amazon rainforest.
Clear-cut logging threatens the green
crown of boreal circling the globe.
Earth's natural biosphere balance disturbed
as stored carbon releases into the atmosphere.

And we fiddle as temperatures rise,
recycle, sign petitions, make donations,
join organizations that in one case urges
conscious toilet paper users to take the pledge.

Wipe Right to celebrate National Toilet Paper Day!
Purge rolls of old-growth virgin forest fiber
promising Quilted Comfort, Soft or Super Soft.
Pledge to sustainable, biodegradable.
Each wipe saves a tree reduces greenhouse gas
satisfied you have answered the urgent call.

No Place To Hide

Roads, highways choked with traffic multiple.
Loud. motorcycles startle, weave between cars.
Hot shots in hot rods fly by gunning engines,
speed limits ignored.

It's worth your life out there.

Add threats of wildfires, floods, heat stroke.
Imagine a planet beyond our control where

no species could thrive or hide.
If we could, where would we go? Mars?

I don't think so. Aside from time taken,
traffic getting there is lethal. Dodging man-made
trash, ballistic junk from discarded satellites
careening around, all shapes and sizes.

From unmanned space craft
to spent rockets and small bolt-size parts
to as large and odd as a red Tesla roadster
with a manikin driver.

A cemetery, too, for human remains, encapsulated
ashes fired aloft—Star Trek's creator among them.
Septic systems emptied there, and astronaut urine
transformed into glimmering snowflake clouds
afloat in perpetuity.

The choices seem grim. We might all be launched,
encapsulated or not, as an earth-bound ego maniac
casually mentions nuclear weapons
and there's no place to hide.

The AutoEthnographer





By S Tsuchiya for Unsplash

Social Responsibility

Mine began with boycotting grapes—
Caesar Chavez, farmworkers, wages.
Then Viet Nam *Make Love Not War, Another Mother
For Peace*. Mass marches on Market Street
pussy hats, *Black Lives Matter*, petitions signed
doorbells rung, postcards written.

And before all that the Cold War—
a nuclear threat. At least I'd go down
waving pamphlet's, *Better Red Than Dead*.

But bamboo toilet paper is a bridge too far—
I can't save the planet 1-ply at a time
nor by short showers and a bucket of water
too heavy to carry. Let the young take over
as I languish in my rocking chair
with times past: riding rapids on the Colorado,
snorkeling off Maui's beaches among schools
of azure Angelfish, golden Damsel and white, yellow
banners of the Pennant gliding through flourishing coral.
Never thinking beaches would erode, coral bleach
and die or the mighty Colorado recede, ebb away.

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Author

laurel
