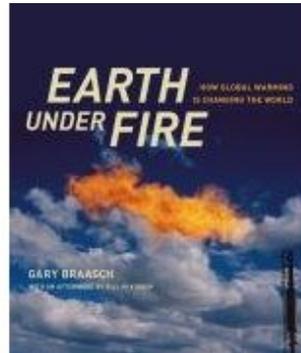


Earth Under Fire: How Global Warming is Changing the World

Gary Braasch

University of California Press 2007



Photojournalist and author Braasch (*Photographing the Patterns of Nature*) uses his award-winning skill behind the camera to produce a practical, level-headed and thorough overview of the current state of global warming, from a ground-level definition to stunning images of its effects: villages swept away by encroaching water, immigrating plant populations, disappearing glaciers and decimated habitats. Braasch discusses rationally the current and future impact of global warming—showing how "the earth is becoming a different planet as the ice withdraws"—bolstering statistics such as "Americans spend \$450,000 a minute on imported oil" and "634 million people are no more than 33 feet above sea level" with well-informed text, charts, maps and sidebars from scholars and activists. The last third is devoted to "choosing a safer, cleaner, and cooler world," looking at how renewable fuels, energy conservation and efficiency, green building standards and local eating have a real impact on the planet's health. Happily, Braasch's view is hopeful, even when contemplating the world without us: "life will go on in some form whether or not coral reefs or rainforests exist, or whether atmospheric oxygen is reduced by half or carbon dioxide quadrupled."

Earth Under Fire: How Global Warming is Changing the World is a comprehensive look at the world wide effects of climate change. In dramatic photographs, maps and quotes from world climate science leaders, this one-of-a-kind book shows how the earth is being changed right now. The book illustrates on-going shifts from weather extremes and melting glaciers to disruptions of animal migration and plant growth -- including the strong impact on human life, cities and cultures.

Earth Under Fire ends with a vision of how we can slow global warming and improve the lives of people everywhere.

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With essays by Camille Parmesan and Thomas E. Lovejoy. Sidebar, "Risking the Gifts of the Earth" on the climate change dangers to natural systems that support us all.

Excerpt:

"The list of famed parks and World Heritage Sites under great pressure from human development, and now also affected by climate change, reads like an eco-tourist's dream itinerary: the Everglades and West Bengal's Sundarban mangrove forest, the Great Barrier Reef and Florida Keys, Monteverde Cloud Forest and the Daintree rainforest of northern Queensland, Glacier National Park and Mt. Kilimanjaro, Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park, the Farallon Islands, Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the Antarctic Peninsula, to name just a few. Even natural paradises that have just been

discovered and are free of direct human damage are menaced by climate change. Just weeks after expeditions from Kew Gardens in London and Conservation International announced discovery of a new genus of palm tree and previously unknown species of insects, birds, frogs, and a marsupial tree kangaroo in the highlands of New Guinea, another researcher said weather records showed the place was warming twenty times faster than previously known...

"As Thomas Lovejoy put it at the protected area conference, "We have to stop thinking we can protect a few postage stamps with fences around them and use up all the rest." The land set aside in national parks and reserves, including their ecosystem services to us, will deteriorate without strong interconnections with surrounding land, water, and people who care about them. The reverse is likely true as well: surrounding land, water, and people will deteriorate if the protected areas are lost. We need to protect biodiversity and whole ecosystems not for their sake alone, but also to help us survive climate change."

4. TOMORROW'S CLIMATE TODAY

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Chapter 5: CHOOSING A SAFER, CLEANER AND COOLER WORLD

The larger implications of global warming. Where we are heading and what should be done about it. Includes an essay, "Policy and Protocol in the UN Climate Convention," explaining what nations, including the U.S., did and did not agree to do about climate change. Also lawyers and justices turn up the heat in "Global Warming on Trial."

Excerpt:

"The most serious global warming threat is from coal. This fact, as well as the world's dependence on oil and the overall unsustainability of our energy use, reveals the stark truth that climate change is, more than anything else, an energy problem the size of our civilization....

"If we focus too narrowly on the economic balance sheet of energy use and climate change, we miss the lessons of science and history.... Not often mentioned is the fact that for the few millennia that humans have farmed, tended livestock, gathered in cities, and developed technology, the Earth's temperature has been relatively stable. "Yet today," wrote Thomas Lovejoy and Lee Hannah recently in the International Herald Tribune, "despite all the signals from nature, we are failing to come to grips with the fact that we are changing the climate ourselves." We are changing the climate. This is a powerful truth, considering climate's controlling role in creating the habitat of every living thing and its influence over the course of human events....

"However they come about, new controls on greenhouse gas emissions will have to be made across the entire spectrum of energy production and use. It is nothing short of a transformation to a world that still enjoys abundant energy, but it will be energy that comes from different sources.... An intelligent and fast-acting program for moving toward the best energy sources will have to involve equitable costs for carbon emissions and fair limits on greenhouse gas emissions; a level economic and legal playing field for all energy sources, purveyors, and users; and an open marketplace in which pollution level, safety, siting, and price will select the mix of sources. The fact of global warming is that we are going to need some combination of all kinds of clean energy." Copyright © 2007 Gary Braasch

Sidebars: Policy and Protocol in the UN Climate Convention

Global Warming on Trial

Afterword by Bill McKibben