

## **Apocalypse never: Why Environmentalism Hurts us All**

**Michael Shellenberger**

The hucksters have grown very rich on our gullibility.

Fear mongers have been projecting an apocalypse for as long as we can remember. The timeframes are always chosen to be short enough to demand drastic action now, but long enough to be unverifiable. But the catastrophes never happen! They won't happen. As much as the alarmists fudge and misread the data, the earth is simply not getting appreciably warmer.

It is the same story with extinctions. The polar bears, poster child of impending extinctions, have increased their numbers threefold over the past half-century. Though activists claim that species are going extinct at an unprecedented rate, they have a hard time finding actual cases they can cite. The ivory billed woodpecker, a century ago? Whoops, somebody spotted one. The Costa Rican golden toad, last seen in 1988? Probably true – a minor species in a very narrow ecological niche. There is no known reason for its extinction, and such extinctions take place in every era of geological history. It's the nature of evolution.

Wildfires in California and Australia? Yes, but the alarmists almost invariably create graphs that start late enough that they do not show far more catastrophic events in earlier periods. See Tony Heller on YouTube for how that fraud is done.

Rising oceans? They have risen and fallen throughout geological history. Fortunately tropical reefs have usually grown faster, and are growing fast enough, that they can stay ahead of rising waters. Scientists have extensive records going back centuries on the rise of the oceans. Yes, they are rising, but no faster today than two centuries ago.

Increasing property damage due to fire, flood, hurricanes and the like? True, but entirely attributable to the fact that more people build in areas that are risky.

Shellenberger points out that even the IPCC, the keeper of the data and the prime mover behind catastrophic climate models, does not make claims nearly as extreme as the politicians such as Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez.

Shellenberger describes the progression I myself observed in the Mato Grosso del Sur portion of the Amazon rain forest. The area is lightly settled and property titles are seldom clear. Farmers will take a chunk of the forest, cut and sell the useful wood, most valuable being mahogany, burn the rest and run cattle, and then maybe convert it to soybean cultivation. It is a process that should not be defended – it certainly does destroy biodiversity.

It does not, however, threaten to overload the atmosphere with CO<sub>2</sub>. The new growth that replaces the old absorbs atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> through photosynthesis. Rain forest soils are notoriously poor in the first place, since there is a plant evolved to fill every ecological niche where nutrients are to be found. Soybeans might even improve the soil. The alarmists overstate the danger, and make statements that are out right untrue.

Europe deforested itself over the past millennium to increase the amount of food grown and to harvest timber to build their navies. It changed the landscape, but not that many species went extinct and the agricultural crops participate in the carbon cycle much the same as the original forest cover did. Ironically, the move to the cities and improved crops have reduced the pressure on wild areas. In New England, for instance, forests are

reclaiming abandoned farms. Shellenberger writes “globally, new tree growth exceeded tree loss for the last 35 years, by an area the size of Texas and Alaska combined.”

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem. Many species of pine depend on periodic fires; their cones open when heated, allowing the seeds to take advantage of newly cleared ground. Species such as redwood and cork oak have fire resistant bark that allows them to survive as competing species are cleared out.

Conversely, suppressing fires and forbidding controlled burns leads to out-of-control fires such as California has experience over the last decade. Forest managers need to recognize that fire is part of the forest ecology. Property owners need to be made to bear the risk of building in such areas.

Symbolic gestures such as plastic straws amount to no more than virtue signaling devices. To make a real difference we would have to give up the lumbering machines we use to drive to the fast food place that issues those straws in the first place. There is a vast amount of hypocrisy in the environmental crowd.

There have been five great extinctions in the half billion years since life emerged on earth. They were all caused by geological events that are vastly beyond mankind’s power to control. Huge basalt flows such as those in the New Jersey Palisades and the Deccan traps in India released monumental amounts of carbon dioxide and spewed ash into the atmosphere. The double whammy, first ash reducing sunlight and thus photosynthesis, and then serious amounts of carbon dioxide contributing to global warming, caused the extinction of vast numbers of plant and animal species.

The amount of carbon dioxide these events created far exceeds the Earth’s total remaining fossil fuel endowment. In other words, we couldn’t approach what they accomplish even if we burned every bit of fossil fuel remaining on earth. Why is this? The carbon trapped in the Earth’s crust is several orders of magnitude greater than the carbon that has been captured by photosynthesis and trapped as fossil fuels and biomass.

There could be a sixth great extinction, but don’t look for it coming from fossil fuels. The most likely current candidates are the Yellowstone caldera and the activity around Campo Flegrei in the vicinity of Mount Vesuvius.

Environmentalism has created huge fortunes. The electric car industry does not make economic or ecological sense. It amounts to displacing the production of carbon dioxide (not that bad in the first place – see above) from our vehicles to electric generation plants a long ways away. The electric car industry has been largely built by tax incentives, the most beneficial beneficiary of which is Elon Musk. As I write, his companies have never made a profit and yet he is the fourth richest man in the world.

Mining the lithium and rare earths to make wind turbines and batteries is environmentally quite destructive. Not only is the wind power intermittent – not a good substitute for fossil fueled generators that operate independent of the weather – but they wear out. There is no good way to recycle huge windmills when they reach the end of their operating life. As things stand today, they remain eyesores dotting the landscape.

Al Gore is another billionaire huckster. Bill McGibbon isn’t trailing far behind. Among other things they advocate the use of biomass for generating electricity. Shellenberger contends this is not only a monumental misuse of agricultural land, but by the time the carbon fuel required to grow, harvest and process the biofuel is taken into account, it is carbon neutral.

Paradoxically, the very people who want to reduce carbon emissions are allied with the anti-nuclear forces. Nuclear does provide inexpensive, reliable, and carbon free energy. But it also competes with solar and wind energy, which is more profitable to these do-gooders.

The paragraphs above touch on about half the chapters in the book. The theme is the same. The environmental movement is largely controlled by hucksters who have grown immensely rich by funneling our tax dollars into their pockets. It is built on false premises, which Shellenberger masterfully exposes. See also Michael Moore's movie "Planet of the Humans" and writings by Greenpeace founder Patrick Moore and skeptical environmentalist Bjorn Lomborg. Five stars.