

By Curtis Johnson

From [For the Planet and Humanity](#) | Original Article

I haven't written in a while. Wondering frankly, what good will any of it do?

I've been focused on restoration and forest research work. Putting efforts towards being connected with the earth and nature, and trying to give back whatever I can to try to make things better, if not right. To live and experience life in the places I cherish and hold most dear. And it's been glorious and fulfilling in many ways.

But of course the wheels keep spinning in my brain. Again I've started thinking more about what can be done to make any contribution, even if small, to actually meaningful change to the preservation of the natural world, and to humanity. Which after all, is basically the whole shooting match.

The environmental questions confronting us as humans today on earth, are so big, and often overwhelming. Yes, but they are what they are and there's no good that not paying attention will do.

All kinds of restoration and protection projects all over the globe are being done, with tremendous value. So much good work, effort, sweat and blood, and thought, mountains of time put in to protect and restore nature by so many people across the globe, millions. And I think it matters, tremendously and has accomplished some really crucial things. Things to be proud of. To extol. And alongside that, a growing awareness and desire is developing among millions, tens of millions, to protect, and not lose life on our planet. To preserve, to protect, to advance natural beauty and wonder. I feel real connection with all those working for this.

And yet up against all of that, is the continual, relentless grinding and rapaciousness of this system of capitalism going about its business.... of exploitation, profit-making, expansion-

causing ruination, destruction of plant life, trees, animals, microbes, habitat. A climate crisis that continues and isn't abating, and in fact continues to worsen as even now, global emissions continue to rise despite all the blather from the world's most powerful governments and politicians. A biodiversity and extinction crisis.

A few clicks of my computer reveal this. [31% of tree species threatened with extinction](#) globally. A die-off of insects that are central components of ecosystems, threatening a [collapse of nature](#), caused by habitat destruction, toxic pesticides, and climate change. Bird populations plummeting- [three billion lost](#) in North America since 1970. A few more clicks would find me more pages of the great elimination being undertaken at the hand of human society as now constituted.

The wiping out of so much natural beauty and amazing wonder, jaw-dropping adaptations, miracles if you will, of evolution over hundreds of millions of years. How could one exist on a planet where there are no more magnificent [Redwood forest trees and ecosystems?](#) Or the elimination of polar bears that hunt the Arctic icelands and can swim tens of miles across ocean water, formerly rich off of Arctic sea life, and now being found [starving to death](#)

. Tens of thousands of other species-amphibians, mammals, reptiles, conifers, sharks, cycads, lichens [threatened with extinction](#)

In all this, it's crucial to understand that no species exist as separate entities, they are connected-independent yet often bound together through rich relationships of feeding, predation, decomposing, nutrient recycling, mutualistic interactions, neutrality or competitive interactions in interwoven ecosystems. All interacting with each other, and with the landscape, climate, geography, soils. Even making, and sometimes remaking each other.

As my [Forest Ecosystems textbook](#) by David Perry says, "any specific relationship among organisms within an ecosystem is embedded within and interacts with a hierarchy of interactions that encompass whole communities, landscapes and ultimately most (or perhaps even all) living things on earth."

Removing especially keystone species, and degrading species presence or populations can impact and subvert whole ecosystems. It can even impact larger ecosystems regionally and globally. Living, healthy natural ecosystems are what provide life and the basis for life, to humans on this planet. Furnishing the oxygen we need to breath, clean water and air, providing food, shelter, nutrients, and controlling climate, providing a rich cultural life to indigenous populations who are themselves under assault. And natural ecosystems, of all kinds, are a source of inspiration and amazement to all who are open to life.

Without healthy ecosystems, [we as a species](#), are not long for this planet. Life in some forms will no doubt continue and eventually flourish again, if human society succeeds in wiping much out, (that's my opinion at least). We may not.

Will we, or the next generations be the ones to witness the destruction of the natural basis of our lives, and hence human existence? Even our own tremendous works of beauty, of language, poetry and prose, of art, of science, sports, of love and compassion, all of our great accomplishments as human beings left to ruin? Or not.

So feeling the need to do what I can do-at least write to indict and to impact what is happening in whatever way I can. To speak to the need for us all to wake up, to realize and confront what is rolling out in front of our eyes. We must stop this.

As these thoughts are crashing and weaving through my brain, I reflect briefly on the UN's International Panel on Climate Change 6th assessment report and a [report from CNN](#) on its principal findings.

I quote extensively below from CNN's Laura Paddison. (all bolded emphases are my own)

"The world is rapidly approaching catastrophic levels of heating with international climate goals set to slip out of reach **unless immediate and radical action is taken**, according to a new UN-backed report.

'The climate time-bomb is ticking,' said António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United

Nations, in a statement to mark the launch of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's synthesis report on Monday. 'Humanity is on thin ice – and that ice is melting fast,' he added.

'This report is the most dire and troubling assessment yet of the spiraling climate impacts we all face if systemic changes are not made now,' Sara Shaw, program coordinator at Friends of the Earth International, said in a statement.

The impacts of planet-warming pollution are already more severe than expected and we are hurtling towards increasingly dangerous and irreversible consequences, the report says.

While the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels is still possible, the report noted, the pathway to achieving it is rapidly closing as global production of planet-heating pollution continues to increase – emissions grew by nearly 1% last year.

Concentrations of carbon pollution in the atmosphere are at their highest level for more than two million years and the rate of temperature rise over the last half a century is the highest in 2,000 years.

The impacts of the climate crisis continue to fall hardest on poorer, vulnerable countries that have done least to cause it.

Despite the International Energy Agency saying in 2021 that there can now be no new fossil fuel developments if the world is to meet climate commitments, governments are continuing to approve oil, gas and coal projects.

The Biden administration has just greenlit the hugely controversial [Willow oil drilling project](#) in Alaska. Once operational, it is projected to produce enough oil to release 9.2 million metric tons of planet-warming carbon pollution a year – equivalent to adding 2 million gas-powered cars to the roads.

Staving off the worst impacts of the climate crisis will require radical shifts across every sector of the economy and society, according to the report.

It called for deep cuts to planet-heating pollution by moving away from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy. To limit warming to 1.5 degrees, global levels of planet-heating pollution must fall by 60% by 2035 compared with 2019, according to the report.”

“Immediate and radical action”, “radical shifts across every sector of the economy and society”. These are the words of the world’s best minds on the state of our climate today on planet Earth and what is required to stabilize it. Do we think any of the powers that be on this planet are going to undertake any of this? No chance. And if you think so, stop deluding yourself.

Planetary life faces a yawning gulf. We are at a precipice. A precipice which has been known about for decades, has been researched deeply, documented voluminously, and presented by scientists to every government on earth. No one who is thinking and paying attention is unaware.

There is a way out, if we act urgently, as human people and civilizations to combat this crisis, it could be done so large portions of life, and ourselves are saved, even at this late date. But those in power of the world’s most powerful capitalist countries especially only continue give lip service while not taking any actually meaningful steps that can truly address the scale of this problem, which is afterall, about whether major parts of life, and ourselves, will continue for very much longer.. Instead, they continue apace to maneuver and battle for power, control, profitability and position over their competitors. New crises, like the war in Ukraine, are seen as necessities and opportunities for more exploitation of fossil fuels, even as they do develop more “green technology” which is also a sphere for competition.

We can decide to wrest power away from them. No, it’s not easy and would require tremendous sacrifice. By what do we have to lose? What do we have to gain, to save? Think it over.

