

Accelerating Climate Change and the Living Earth Alan K Betts

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As climate change accelerates, we are seeing many extreme events have never occurred before. I am going to discuss a set of these and put them in the context of the perspective of the Earth. Fifty years ago, I realized we were heading for a climate catastrophe, because no-one accepted responsibility for the earth. So I asked: “How do we merge science with wisdom”. My forty-year journey was published as “The Earth’s View of Climate Change” in March 2022 (alanbetts.com/research)

Our scientific perspective used to be that the 10,000 ft thick E. Antarctica ice sheet would be stable for centuries. However on March 19, 2022, a new temperature record was set at the Concordia weather station on the E. Antarctica plateau that was 70°F above the 30-year climatology, as the desert air over Australia was advected to sit over this ice-sheet. One stunned scientist said: “If you had told me 3 days ago this would happen, we would never, never have believed you.” Overnight, they glimpsed a new world, where a 20 ft global sea-level rise from the combined melt of the Greenland, Arctic and Antarctic ice-sheets becomes a possibility within decades.

This is one way the Earth can deal with us. Our attitude is that we are in charge and we can make money even if the earth is destroyed. So take a deep breath – I have the advantage that my perspective is based on what the living Earth has shown me directly.

Hurricane after hurricane has damaged oil wells off the Texas and Louisiana coasts and we rebuild them. But the Texas freeze in February 2021 was a radically new event. This originated in the stratospheric oscillation over the North Pole, propagated down into the Arctic troposphere and then southward as a series of freezing blobs that sat over Texas, freezing and destroying infrastructure for 2 weeks. The Texas infrastructure was not winterized, and much of the electrical power system shut down. From the Earth’s perspective, the real target was the Texas oil refineries, which suffered more damage from this February freeze than any major hurricane.

In late June and into July, 2021, the most extreme heatwave ever recorded in the northwest US states and into British Columbia (BC) had widespread temperatures over 100°F. The small town of Lytton in southwest Canada was warmer three days in a row until it reached 121 °F. Imagine Death Valley temperatures in a Canadian forest. On the fourth day Lytton simply caught fire and burnt down. This extreme broke the all-Canadian temperature record, set during a drought in southern Saskatchewan 80 years ago, by an unimaginable 8 °F. Canada was stunned. The extreme temperatures led to widespread fires that burnt and destabilized hillsides. The Earth was still planning ahead. In mid-November 2021 an atmospheric river off the Pacific dumped a month of rain on the region in two days. This generated massive mud and debris slides that closed the Trans-Canada Highway and national railway line. To us a ‘supply-chain interruption’ but useful from the Earth’s perspective, as BC is mining and liquefying natural gas and exporting products from the tar sands of Alberta, all to speed the destruction of life on Earth.

Eastern Australia is experiencing new record floods in Queensland and New South Wales after devastating wildfires in the same region. The latest catastrophic flood around Sydney was July 2-4, 2022. A huge storm cell brought a year's worth of rain in three days to some areas and led to the evacuation of 85,000 people, as their homes were flooded. The Earth's reason is apparent in the maps of the many coal mines around Sydney (and in Queensland). Companies were enjoying cash profit margins of about 45%, and mining more the 10 billion tons of coal per year. No-one is discussing the connection - instead the claim has been made that Australia is not responsible for the climate consequences as the coal is burnt elsewhere!

On one level society understands the accelerating climate crisis is out of our control unless we rapidly cut the burning of the fossil fuels, which we have refused to do for decades because it is so profitable. So the living Earth, which **is** responsible for life on earth, is taking over and targeting our fossil infrastructure, as well as planning to flood our coasts. So far we refuse to discuss the implications of this, since we pretend we are the smart species in charge. The reality is we have to surrender to the Earth's perspective, but this is so hard for most to grasp when centuries of militarism has trained us to 'fight, fight and never surrender.' Nonetheless the Earth can read our minds and patiently wait for us to glimpse reality!

