

Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet

By Bill McKibben

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The bestselling author of **Deep Economy** shows that we're living on a fundamentally altered planet — and opens our eyes to the kind of change we'll need in order to make our civilization endure.

Twenty years ago, with **The End of Nature**, Bill McKibben offered one of the earliest warnings about global warming. Those warnings went mostly unheeded; now, he insists, we need to acknowledge that we've waited too long, and that massive change is not only unavoidable but already under way. Our old familiar globe is suddenly melting, drying, acidifying, flooding, and burning in ways that no human has ever seen. We've created, in very short order, a new planet, still recognizable but fundamentally different. We may as well call it Eaarth.

That new planet is filled with new binds and traps. A changing world costs large sums to defend — think of the money that went to repair New Orleans, or the trillions of dollars it will take to transform our energy systems. But the endless economic growth that could underwrite such largesse depends on the stable planet we've managed to damage and degrade. We can't rely on old habits any longer.

Our hope depends, McKibben argues, on scaling back — on building the kind of societies and economies that can hunker down, concentrate on essentials, and create the type of community (in the neighborhood, but also on the Internet) that will allow us to weather trouble on an unprecedented scale. Change — fundamental change — is our best hope on a planet suddenly and violently out of balance.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Amazon Best Books of the Month, April 2010: Since he first heralded our era of environmental collapse in 1989's *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben has raised a series of eloquent alarms. In *Eaarth*, he leads readers to the devastatingly comprehensive conclusion that we no longer inhabit the world in which we've flourished for most of human history: we've passed the tipping point for dramatic climate change, and even if we could stop emissions yesterday, our world will keep warming, triggering more extreme storms, droughts, and other erratic catastrophes, for centuries to come. This is not just our grandchildren's problem, or our children's--we're living through the effects of climate change now, and it's time for us to get creative about our survival. McKibben pulls no punches, and swaths of this book can feel bleak, but his dry wit and pragmatic optimism refuse to yield to despair. Focusing our attention on inspiring communities of "functional independence" arising around the world, he offers galvanizing possibilities for keeping our humanity intact as the world we've known breaks down. --*Mari Malcolm*

Amazon Exclusive: A Conversation Between Curt Stager and Bill McKibben

Curt Stager is the author of *Deep Future: The Next 100,000 Years of Life on Earth*.



Bill McKibben: How'd you come to worry about this global warming stuff in the first place?

Curt Stager: When your book, *The End of Nature*, first came out, I already knew about global warming but wasn't very worried about it yet. I'm a paleoclimatologist, so I was used to thinking about huge climatic changes of the distant past, and I also wasn't convinced by what was then the available evidence that humans are driving most of today's trend. But now so many excellent studies clearly demonstrate our central role in the warming of the last 30-40 years that I've moved on from "is it really happening" mode to "what does it mean" and "what can we do about it?" Another factor was a project that you asked me to do in support of one of your articles several years ago - to study the weather records in our home region in and around northern New York and Vermont. The latest data show that much of this area is actually warming faster than the global average, and ice stays on our lakes two weeks less in an average winter than it did a century ago.

Because of all this, I suppose you could say that I'm a "reformed climate skeptic" now.

Bill McKibben: What kind of timescales do we need to be thinking on to really understand what's happening?

Curt Stager: We've got to expand our view of this issue a thousand-fold to really grasp it. According to the latest research, much of the heat-trapping carbon dioxide we release during our lifetimes will linger in the air not just for centuries but for tens of thousands of years, long enough to affect future ice ages.

Curt Stager: *Eaarth* is one of the most amazing book titles I've ever seen; in a single word it beautifully captures the essence of what you're trying to tell us about our influences on the planet. How did you come by it?

Bill McKibben: Well, I wanted a way to get across the idea that we're already living on an altered planet. Not as altered as it's going to be, but--for people my age, the iconic image of our planet was that first photo back from the Apollo spacecraft. And the world does not look like that any more. A lot less white up top! Somehow we have to figure out how to get the message across that global warming is not a problem for the future, it's a desperate crisis already.

Bill McKibben: Scientists are forever struggling to communicate effectively with the general public. You're a whiz at it, as this book, and your work in places like National Geographic, make clear. What advice would you give your colleagues?

Curt Stager: That's a fine compliment coming from a master wordsmith like yourself, but it's particularly nice to hear in my case because when I first started my scientific career, back in the 1980s, communicating with the public was openly frowned upon. Nowadays I'm glad to see that it's much more widely accepted, even encouraged, and there are many great opportunities for scientists to be trained in such things. I was fortunate enough to attend a public communications workshop sponsored by the National Science Foundation, for example. But don't be fooled, you science types; there's a lot more to writing effectively for the public than you may think. When it's done properly it appears smooth and natural, but that's not because it's easy; it's a sign of skill and effort. Pay this craft the respect it deserves and learn from people who know what they're doing, then go out and really earn your grants by letting us all know how you spent our tax dollars!

Curt Stager: You do a good job of keeping up with the latest developments in climate research even though you're not a professional scientist. Do you have any advice in that regard for non-science types who are trying to wade through the information jungle in search of current, reliable information about climate change?

Bill McKibben: Like any other huge field, you need some guides--picking someone like Jim Hansen who's been right again and again seems like a good strategy. You need to keep abreast of the important science as it develops. And you need to find some journalists who have paid attention for a long time: Bryan Walsh at *Time*, Andy Revkin at the *New York Times*, and so forth. But the trick is not to be too caught up in the details, and keep your eye on the main current: the debate about whether we're warming the planet is no longer interesting. What's interesting is what we're going to do about it.

From Publishers Weekly
The world as we know it has ended forever: that's the melancholy message of this nonetheless cautiously optimistic assessment of the planet's future by McKibben, whose *The End of Nature* first warned of global warming's inevitable impact 20 years ago. Twelve books later, the committed environmentalist concedes that

the earth has lost the climatic stability that marked all of human civilization. His litany of damage done by a carbon-fueled world economy is by now familiar: in some places rainfall is dramatically heavier, while Australia and the American Southwest face a permanent drought; polar ice is vanishing, glaciers everywhere are melting, typhoons and hurricanes are fiercer, and the oceans are more acidic; food yields are dropping as temperatures rise and mosquitoes in expanding tropical zones are delivering deadly disease to millions. McKibben's prescription for coping on our new earth is to adopt maintenance as our mantra, to think locally not globally, and to learn to live lightly, carefully, gracefully—a glass-half-full attitude that might strike some as Pollyannaish or merely insufficient. But for others McKibben's refusal to abandon hope may restore faith in the future. *(Apr.)*
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From Booklist
Starred Review For 20 years McKibben has been writing with clarity and zeal about global warming, initially in the hope of staving it off and now in an effort to lessen its dire impact. With climate change under way, we now live on a far less hospitable planet than the one on which our civilizations coalesced for 10,000 years amidst resplendent biological diversity. McKibben postulates that because today’s planet is so much hotter, stormier, and more chaotic with droughts, vanishing ice, dying forests, encroaching deserts, acid oceans, increased wildfires, and diminishing food crops, it merits a new name: “Eaarth.” Although his meticulous chronicling of the current “cascading effects” of climate change is truly alarming, it isn’t utterly devastating. That’s because McKibben, reasonable and compassionate, reports with equal thoroughness on the innovations of proactive individuals and groups and explicates the benefits of ending our dependence on fossil fuels, industrial agriculture, and the unbalanced, unjust global economy. What distinguishes McKibben as an environmental writer beyond his literary finesse and firm grasp of the complexities of science and society is his generous pragmatism, informed vision of small-scale solutions to our food and energy needs, and belief that Eaarth will remain a nurturing planet if we face facts, jettison destructive habits, and pursue new ways of living with creativity and conscience. --Donna Seaman

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ricky Burnham:

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Catherine Riddle:

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experience.

Charles Wagoner:

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to perform! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book could be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing you will ask may be what kinds of e-book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the publication untitled Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet can be very good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

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