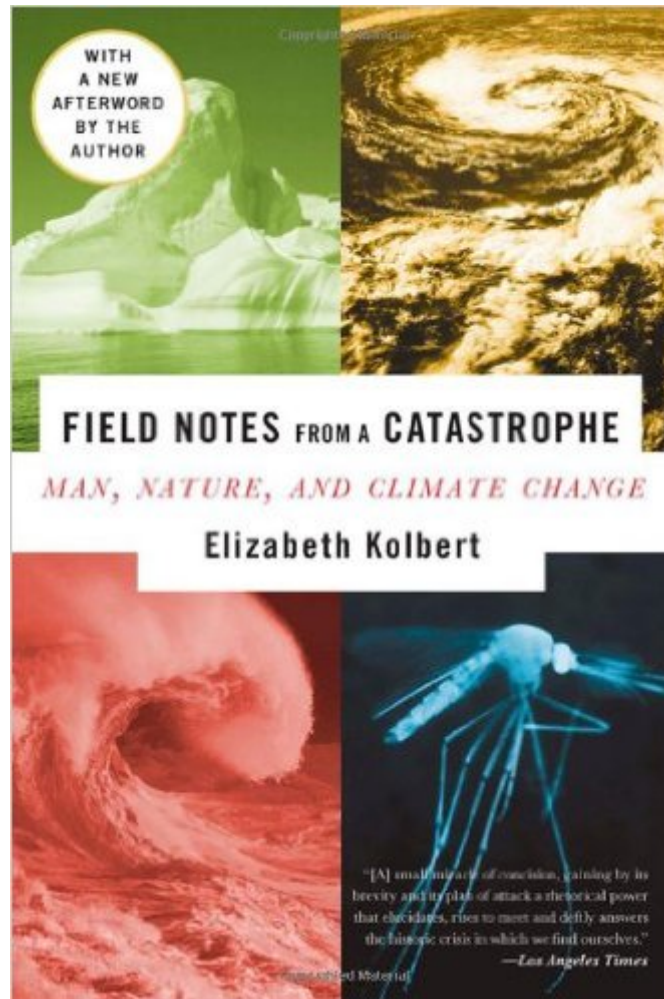


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# Field Notes From A Catastrophe: Man, Nature, And Climate Change



## Synopsis

Long known for her insightful and thought-provoking political journalism, author Elizabeth Kolbert now tackles the controversial and increasingly urgent subject of global warming. In what began as groundbreaking three-part series in the *New Yorker*, for which she won a National Magazine Award in 2006, Kolbert cuts through the competing rhetoric and political agendas to elucidate for Americans what is really going on with the global environment and asks what, if anything, can be done to save our planet. Now updated and with a new afterword, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* is the book to read on the defining issue and greatest challenge of our times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One never ceases to marvel at the consistent way in which we humans seem to be lunging headlong into the ecological abyss. In this wonderful new book by former New York Times reporter Elizabeth Kolbert, the reader is whisked away into a series of field trips into the myriad of places across the globe where the increasing evidence of approaching disaster is being observed, discussed, and reacted to in ways that has to give the reader pause. Eskimos are abandoning a small island in the Arctic Ocean even as the surrounding ice cap that once protected from wind and storm damage melts into oblivion as a direct result of the Greenhouse Effect. Kolbert offer us poignant glimpses at humans forced to confront ugly truths about the nature of the Anthropocene era, that is, that so-far limited expanse of time that humans have inhabited the earth. Presented with the bulk of the evidence, it is hard for an objective intellect to escape the distinct possibility that as a species we seem to be hell-bent on self-destruction. Indeed, the breadth and scope of the manifest

effects of climate change on human habitation is breath-taking, affecting societies as far-flung as Netherlands to Siberia, from South Africa to the Great Barrier Reef. She writes wryly about stepping through the looking glass in a conversation with a Washington wonk who attempted to justify the Bush administration's active opposition to both the Kyoto Treaty and any attempt to rework it into a manageable tool to effectively combat the effects of global warming. It is in such encounters that she discovers her voice and her poignant sense of urgency; if the best educated among us choose to stand in active opposition, what chance is there to turn this catastrophic change in climate around?

Discussing global climate patterns which are exacerbating weather changes worldwide, Elizabeth Kolbert explains how human-induced global will likely have dire consequences. In the Netherlands, Kolbert explains, construction is under way on buoyant roads and amphibious homes resembling toasters. In Alaska, as myopic politicians insist on drilling for more the last drop of oil, climate change is forcing people to leave their homes and, as Kolbert explains, their ways of life. This will affect us all, as conflict over basic needs could soon turn the United States into a fully guarded zone, with security personnel staving off millions of migrants from flooded regions. Yet, as Kolbert also notes, the United States is the largest emitter of carbon in the world. Thus, the U.S. population has substantial responsibility for the migrations to come. This book deserves serious attention, not only as a handbook of facts about climate and geography, but also for its keen interest in what real people are experiencing, right now. Kolbert foresees widespread and dire consequences, yet interviews an expert who retains some hope that we could still avert utter disaster. In that sense, there's an element of activism to this book -- although Kolbert's sense of doom is quite clear by the book's conclusion. We're selfish, says this book, and it's killing us. So what should our response be? Carbon emissions are more dangerous due to the increasing lack of forests, which we tear down for cities and rangeland. Methane is second to carbon dioxide in its warming potential; it accounts for 9 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, with more than twenty times the warming potential of carbon dioxide.

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