

Fake & Fiction

Eight invisible catastrophes and threats of doom. By Patrick Moore, Ph.D.

Some time ago it dawned on me that the majority of alleged environmental threats and catastrophes are invisible or very remote, thus making it virtually impossible for the average person to validate them through observation. Observations, along with replications of those observations, are the foundation of the scientific method. Seeing is believing, and seeing the same result again and again under similar circumstances reinforces the belief. Is it possible that activist groups and the media choose to cite supposed threats and catastrophes that are invisible, very remote or both because the majority of people cannot verify them in person and therefore must rely on the activists, the media, and other third parties to tell them the truth? In other words, they just make these stories up? At the conclusion of this essay, the reader may judge. Here's a list of some of the alleged invisible catastrophes and threats of doom.

Coral reefs around the world are dying

This is only one of the many supposed catastrophes blamed on invisible human CO₂ emissions and human-caused climate change. In April 2016 most major media outlets ran with a story implying that 93 percent of the Great Barrier Reef, the largest in the world, was “dead,” “nearly dead” or “dying.”¹ The only data presented for this claim was a report that 93 percent of reefs in the northern section had “some bleaching.” “Some” could be only one percent. And bleaching is not death or even dying. It is a normal occurrence during periods of high heat and the coral usually recovers. Of course, as with all species, some are dying and others are being born at any given time.²

One year later, in April of 2017, *National Geographic* published an article under the headline, “The Great Barrier Reef is now Terminal,” as in terminal cancer.³ This was also widely reported leaving the global public with the impression that the Great Barrier Reef was certain to die entirely.

A brief 18 months later in September of 2018, *Newsweek's* Science and Tech section headlined, “Great Barrier Reef Definitely Not Dead: Experts Announce Significant Signs Of Recovery After Mass Bleaching.”⁴ Far fewer news outlets reported this good news.



Bleached coral is not the same as dead coral. This coral will likely recover once a hot spell ends. How is the average person in Europe or North America supposed to “see for themselves” what is really occurring? Not only is the reef thousands of miles away from most people and far offshore, it is below the surface of the sea. Hundreds of millions of people were told the reef was doomed when we now know much of the bleached coral has already recovered.¹ But that fact was barely reported in major media outlets. Fake news flies, the real story dies.

It is well-known that the world's warmest oceans are in the region of Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Solomon Islands. This area is called the Coral Triangle and it harbors the world's largest number of coral species and the largest number of reef fish and other reef dwellers. Surely this puts to rest the assertion that the seas are “too hot” for corals due to climate change.

Polar bears will become extinct

Again, climate change is the culprit. Melting Arctic ice, thinner ice, and not enough seals to eat are said to be a threat to the bear's very existence.⁵ How many people can go to the Arctic and get a good look at the polar bear population? The truth is the polar bear population has increased from about 6,000-8,000 in the 1960s to 25,000-28,000 today.⁶ This is due mainly to a treaty signed by all the Arctic nations in 1973 that ended the unregulated hunting of polar bears. There is no real reason to fear for their demise. We know polar bears survived the last interglacial period, the Eemian, 110,000 years ago, which was warmer than the current Holocene interglacial period. But photos of old starving bears, bears supposedly “trapped” on ice floes and bears that are thin after a long hibernation are effectively employed to perpetuate the myth that they are threatened with extinction.

The impression is given that more ice in the Arctic automatically translates into more polar bears. But if the majority of the Arctic Ocean is covered in ice there is not much open ocean where plankton can grow in the Arctic summer to feed fish that feed seals that feed polar bears.⁷

In November 2018 the Inuit territorial government of Nunavut in the Canadian Arctic reported that in their estimation, “there are now so many bears that public safety has become a major concern.” Polar bears had killed two Inuit during the previous summer and were regularly breaking into homes in their northern communities. The report stated that most of the regional populations around the Arctic were growing and none of them were declining.⁸ Despite the truth, children are still being taught that polar bears will go extinct unless we end the use of fossil fuels.



This heart-wrenching photo of a polar bear dying of old age was used to claim that polar bears are going extinct due to climate change. National Geographic headlined, “This is What Climate Change Looks Like.”

Climate catastrophe is inevitable due to an increase in atmospheric CO₂ if we don't end the use of fossil fuels

Not only is CO₂ invisible, it is also odorless and tasteless so it cannot be sensed without sophisticated equipment. Yet we are told it is causing a catastrophe of global proportions. The facts that CO₂ is lower in the atmosphere today than it has been through nearly all the history of life and that global temperature during the ongoing 2.5 million-year-long Pleistocene Ice Age is colder than it has been for the past 250 million years are simply ignored.⁹ Never mind the fact that CO₂ is the basis of all life on Earth. CO₂ in the atmosphere and in the oceans is where the carbon

in carbon-based life originates.

At least some attention is now given to the fact that the increase in our CO₂ emissions is causing a greening of the Earth and the spreading of trees to areas that were too dry for them under low-CO₂ conditions.¹⁰ During the past 150 million years CO₂ had steadily declined to such a low level that plants were seriously threatened with starvation during the peak of the last glacial cycle. Thankfully, our emissions have inadvertently reversed that trend, bringing a balance back to the global carbon cycle. All of this can be verified yet the narrative of “climate catastrophe,” which has no basis in science, is hollered from the rooftops around the world.

So many negative impacts are blamed on CO₂ and climate change that it is not possible to list them all in an essay. But because CO₂ is invisible, it is not possible for the public to verify the truth of these claims because they simply can't see what CO₂ is doing, if anything. While it is true that CO₂ is a greenhouse gas, it is present at such low levels compared to H₂O, which accounts for at least 90-95 percent of the greenhouse effect, that the impact of CO₂ may well be insignificant compared to many other factors that affect temperature.¹¹

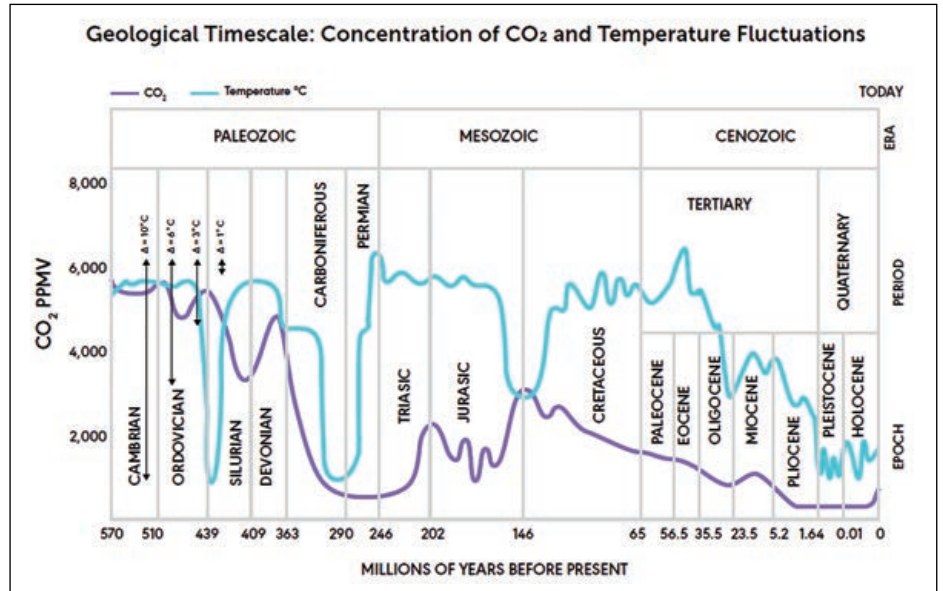
Pesticide residues in our food cause cancer, birth defects, autism, and brain damage

One “health food” website claims pesticides cause nine diseases.¹² It's unfortunate that we can't see, smell, or taste these “residues.” They cannot be observed, which makes it easy to invent stories about an “invisible poison.”

In 1997, the Cancer Research Institutes of the United States and Canada published a multiyear study of all scientific publications reporting on any connection between cancer



There is no demonstrated risk to health from eating fruits and vegetables that have been sprayed with lawfully approved pesticides.



CO₂ had been declining to dangerously low levels during the past 500 million years. Our CO₂ emissions, shown by the uptick on the far right, reversed the trend and brought some balance back to the carbon cycle.

in humans and pesticide residues in food. They did not find a single piece of credible evidence connecting the two. And yet they concluded that 30 percent of human cancers are caused by tobacco consumption, from a natural plant, and that 35 percent of cancers are caused by poor diet, mainly too much fat and cholesterol, also natural substances.¹³

“Africa’s oldest baobab trees are dying at an unprecedented rate, and climate change may be to blame”

This is the actual headline from a *USA Today* article on June 11, 2018. Nearly every major news outlet ran with the story as if it were a harbinger of global doom.¹⁴ Even the online version of Encyclopedia Britannica gave credence to the story. No dead trees were depicted in any of the many articles I searched on the Internet. My first rule of critical thinking is never to trust a report that begins with the words “may,” “might” or “could.” It should read, “may or may not,” etc.

Many readers may or may not have stopped to think that it is perfectly natural for the oldest individuals of any species to die before the younger ones pass away. It might be worth worrying about if the youngest baobab trees were dying at an unprecedented rate if such a rate could be established with credible data.

As for an “unprecedented rate” of older trees dying, the only data provided is from a Romanian chemistry professor who claims, “Eight of the 13 oldest trees in Africa have died over the past decade.”¹⁵ Baobabs have a wide distribution in Africa, across the sub-

Saharan belt and down the east coast as far as South Africa. My research produced no estimate of the total number of baobab trees in Africa but one could hazard a guess that there are tens if not hundreds of thousands of



Unlike most tropical trees, baobabs are deciduous. Many news articles use pictures of trees with no leaves, perhaps implying that they are dying. No photos of dead baobabs appeared with the stories.

them. Without a doubt it would not be unprecedented for eight of the oldest trees to die in a 10-year period. This is less than one tree per year. This might or might not be the silliest story to be taken seriously by the worldwide media lately. Even Fox News covered it.

GMOs will harm us and damage the environment

A cob of conventional corn looks identical to a cob of genetically modified corn. The GM corn may actually look better because it was better protected from insect damage. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration says they are “substantially equivalent,” in other words not different from each other in any meaningful way. Yet hundreds of activist groups insist

PHOTOS AND GRAPH COURTESY PATRICK MOORE



Because there is zero evidence of possible harm from GM foods, anti-GM zealots must resort to scary fake images to drive their campaigns.

there is something in the GM corn, obviously something invisible, that will do evil things to the planet and us.¹⁶ Monsanto, basically a seed and crop protection company, is vilified as if it were producing weapons of mass destruction and using them on civilians. Every credible food, health, and science organization says GM food is perfectly safe.¹⁷ But the propaganda about an invisible poison is effective, and because people can't "see for themselves" they worry a lot about themselves and their children.

Nuclear energy is too dangerous and radiation will kill you¹⁸

Have you ever seen any nuclear radiation? No, because it is invisible—you need a Geiger counter to detect it, which most homes are not equipped with. The fact is, in terms of fatalities per unit of energy produced, nuclear is the safest technology of them all. There has been only one nuclear accident that caused death to civilians, Chernobyl, and according to the World Health Organization it was responsible for 56 deaths. More than that

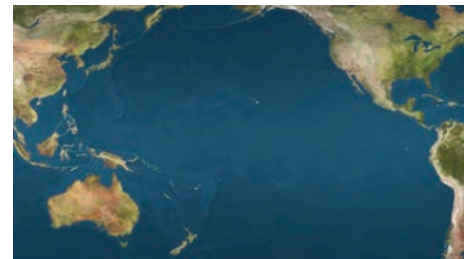
were killed in a single hydroelectric dam accident in Russia in 2009. In the Fukushima incident in 2011 no one died from radiation and according to the Radiation Effects Research Foundation in Hiroshima, there will be no discernable health effects in the future.¹⁹ Yet activist groups have so scared the public with this invisible "threat" that Germany has decided to shut all its nuclear plants and many countries have decided not to build any more. Meanwhile, China, India, and Russia have surpassed the West in nuclear technology and are building scores of new nuclear plants because they know it is the future of electricity production.

There is a "sea of plastic" the size of Texas in the North Pacific Gyre north of Hawaii

First question: have you ever seen an aerial or satellite photograph of the "sea of plastic"? Probably not, because it doesn't really exist. But it makes a good word picture and, after all, plastic is full of deadly poisons and is killing seabirds and marine mammals by the thousands. This is also fake news and gives rise to calls for bans on plastic and other drastic measures. Silly people are banning plastic straws as if they were a threat to the environment. The fact is a piece of plastic floating in the ocean is no more toxic than a piece of wood. Wood has been entering the sea in vast quantities for millions of years. And in the same way that floating woody debris provides habitat for barnacles, seaweeds, and many other species of marine life, so does floating plastic. That's why seabirds and fish eat the bits of plastic, to get the food that is growing on them. While it is true that some individual birds and animals are harmed by plastic debris, discarded fish-



Fake Pacific garbage patch on the Internet.



Actual satellite photo of the Pacific Ocean.

nets in particular, this is far outweighed by the additional food supply it provides. Plastic is not poison or pollution; it is litter.

Is it just a coincidence that eight of the most publicized environmental catastrophes and threats of doom happen to be invisible or very remote, or both? Or is it so much easier to create a fake "narrative" when the public can't check it out for themselves? I will leave that judgment to the reader. ■

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South Korea produces nearly 30 percent of its electricity with nuclear reactors. It is the safest of all electricity technologies measured by fatalities per unit of energy produced.

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