

The Australian

Sorry for misleading you, but I cried wolf on the global dangers of climate change!

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30TH JUNE 2020



Author & environmental policy expert Michael Shellenberger.

On behalf of environmentalists everywhere, I would like to formally apologise for the climate scare we created over the past 30 years. Climate change is happening. It's just not the end of the world. It's not even our most serious environmental problem.

I may seem like a strange person to be saying all of this. I have been a climate activist for 20 years and an environmentalist for 30.

But as an energy expert asked by the US congress to provide objective testimony, and invited by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to serve as a reviewer of its next assessment report, **I feel an obligation to apologise for how badly we environmentalists have misled the public.**

Here are some facts few people know: Humans are **not** causing a “sixth mass extinction”;

The Amazon is **not** “the lungs of the world”;

Climate change is **not** making natural disasters worse;

Fires have **declined** 25 per cent around the world since 2003;

The amount of land we use for meat — humankind’s biggest use of land — has **declined** by an area nearly as large as Alaska;

The build-up of wood fuel & more houses near forests, **not** climate change, explain why there are more, and more dangerous, fires in Australia & California;

Carbon emissions are declining in most rich nations & have been declining in Britain, Germany & France since the mid-1970s;

The Netherlands became rich, not poor, while adapting to life below sea level;

We produce 25 per cent more food than we need & food surpluses will continue to rise as the world gets hotter;

Habitat loss & the direct killing of wild animals are bigger threats to species than climate change;

Wood fuel is far worse for people & wildlife than fossil fuels;

Preventing future pandemics requires more, not less, “industrial” agriculture.

I know the above facts will sound like “**climate denialism**” to many people.

But that just shows the power of climate alarmism. In reality, **the above facts come from the best-available scientific studies,**

including those conducted by or accepted by the IPCC, the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature & other leading scientific bodies.

Some people will, when they read this, imagine that I'm some right-wing anti-environmentalist. I'm not.

At 17, I lived in Nicaragua to show solidarity with the Sandinista socialist revolution.

At 23 I raised money for Guatemalan women's co-operatives.

In my early 20s I lived in the semi-Amazon doing research with small farmers fighting land invasions.

At 26 I helped expose poor conditions at Nike factories in Asia.

Green beginnings

I became an environmentalist at 16 when I threw a fundraiser for Rainforest Action Network.

At 27 I helped save the last unprotected ancient redwoods in California.

In my 30s I advocated renewables and successfully helped persuade the Obama administration to invest \$US90bn into them.

Over the past few years, I helped save enough nuclear plants from being replaced by fossil fuels to prevent a sharp increase in emissions.

But until last year, I mostly avoided speaking out against the climate scare. Partly that's because I was embarrassed. After all, I am as guilty of alarmism as any other environmentalist.

For years, I referred to climate change as an "existential" threat to human civilisation & called it a "crisis".

APOCALYPSE NEVER

WHY ENVIRONMENTAL
ALARMISM HURTS US ALL

MICHAEL
SHELLENBERGER



But mostly I was scared. I remained quiet about the climate disinformation campaign because I was afraid of losing friends & funding.

The few times I summoned the courage to defend climate science from those who misrepresent it I suffered harsh consequences.

And so, I mostly stood by & did next to nothing as my fellow environmentalists terrified the public.

I even stood by as people in the White House & many in the media tried to destroy the reputation & career of an outstanding scientist, good man, and friend of mine, Roger Pielke Jr, a lifelong progressive Democrat & environmentalist who testified in favour of carbon regulations.

Why did they do that? Because his research proves natural disasters aren't getting worse.

But then, last year, things spiralled out of control. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said: "*The*

world is going to end in 12 years if we don't address climate change." Britain's most high-profile environmental group claimed "*climate change kills children*".

Turning point

The world's most influential green journalist, Bill McKibben, called climate change the "*greatest challenge humans have ever faced*" & said it would "*wipe out civilisations*".

Mainstream journalists reported, repeatedly, that the Amazon was "*the lungs of the world*", & that deforestation was like a nuclear bomb going off.

As a result, half of the people surveyed around the world last year said they thought climate change would make humanity extinct.

And in January, one out of five British children told pollsters they were having nightmares about climate change.

Whether or not you have children you must see how wrong this is.

I admit I may be sensitive because I have a teenage daughter. After we talked about the science she was reassured. But her friends are deeply misinformed and thus, understandably, frightened.

I thus decided I had to speak out. I knew that writing a few articles wouldn't be enough. I needed a book to properly lay out all of the evidence.

And so, my formal apology for our fearmongering comes in the form of my new book, **Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All.**

It is based on two decades of research & three decades of environmental activism. At 400 pages, with 100 of them endnotes, *Apocalypse Never* covers climate change, deforestation, plastic waste, species extinction, industrialisation, meat, nuclear energy & renewables.

Some highlights from the book:

- Factories & modern farming are the keys to human liberation & environmental progress.
- The most important thing for saving the environment is producing more food, particularly meat, on less land.
- The most important thing for reducing pollution & emissions is moving from wood to coal to petrol to natural gas to uranium.
- 100 per cent renewables would require increasing the land used for energy from today's 0.5 per cent to 50 per cent.
- We should want cities, farms & power plants to have higher, not lower, power densities.
- Vegetarianism reduces one's emissions by less than 4 per cent.
- Greenpeace didn't save the whales — switching from whale oil to petroleum & palm oil did.
- "Free-range" beef would require 20 times more land & produce 300 per cent more emissions.
- Greenpeace dogmatism worsened forest fragmentation of the Amazon.
- The colonialist approach to gorilla conservation in the Congo produced a backlash that may have resulted in the killing of 250 elephants.

Why were we all so misled? In the final three chapters of *Apocalypse Never* I expose the - financial, political & ideological motivations.

Environmental groups have accepted hundreds of millions of dollars from fossil fuel interests. Groups **motivated by anti-humanist beliefs** forced the World Bank to stop trying to end poverty & instead make poverty "*sustainable*". And status anxiety,

depression & hostility to modern civilisation are behind much of the alarmism.

Reality bites

Once you realise just how badly misinformed we have been, often by people with plainly unsavoury motivations, it is hard not to feel duped.

Will *Apocalypse Never* make any difference?

There are certainly reasons to doubt it. The news media have been making apocalyptic pronouncements about climate change since the late 1980s & do not seem disposed to stop.

The ideology behind environmental alarmism — Malthusianism — has been repeatedly debunked for 200 years & yet is more powerful than ever.

But there are also reasons to believe that environmental alarmism will, if not come to an end, have diminishing cultural power.

A real crisis

The coronavirus pandemic is an actual crisis that puts the climate “*crisis*” into perspective. Even if you think we have overreacted, COVID-19 has killed nearly 500,000 people & shattered economies around the globe.

Scientific institutions including WHO & IPCC have undermined their credibility through the repeated politicisation of science.

Their future existence & relevance depends on new leadership & serious reform.

Facts still matter & social media is allowing for a wider range of new & independent voices to outcompete alarmist environmental journalists at legacy publications.

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Nations are reverting openly to self-interest & away from Malthusianism & neoliberalism, which is good for nuclear & bad for renewables.

The evidence is overwhelming that our high-energy civilisation is better for people & nature than the low-energy civilisation that climate alarmists would return us to.

The invitations from IPCC & congress are signs of a growing openness to new thinking about climate change & the environment.

Another one has been to the response to my book from climate scientists, conservationists & environmental scholars. “*Apocalypse Never is an extremely important book*,” writes Richard Rhodes, the Pulitzer-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. “*This may be the most important book on the environment ever written*,” says one of the fathers of modern climate science, Tom Wigley.

“We environmentalists condemn those with antithetical views of being ignorant of science and susceptible to confirmation bias,” wrote the former head of The Nature Conservancy, Steve McCormick. “*But too often we are guilty of the same. Shellenberger offers ‘tough love’: a challenge to entrenched orthodoxies & rigid, self-defeating mindsets. Apocalypse Never serves up occasionally stinging, but always well-crafted, evidence-based points of view that will help develop the ‘mental muscle’ we need to envision and design not only a hopeful, but an attainable, future.*”

That is all I hoped for in writing it. If you’ve made it this far, I hope you’ll agree it’s perhaps not as strange as it seems that **a lifelong environmentalist & progressive felt the need to speak out against the alarmism.**

I further hope that you’ll accept my apology.