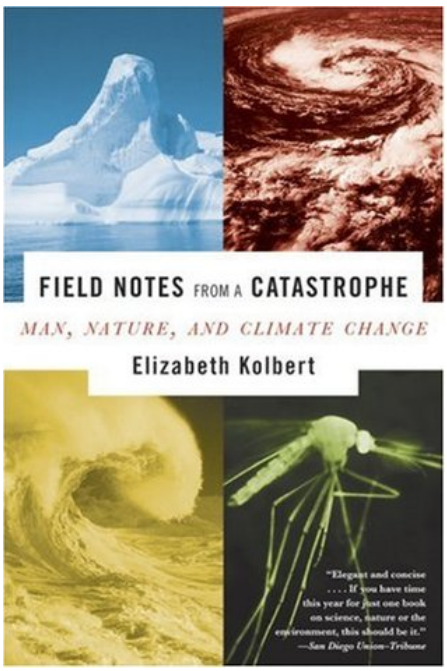

Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change

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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.

Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change Details

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Author	:	Elizabeth Kolbert
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From Reader Review Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change for online ebook

David says

by now a dated review of the science and politics and climate change, but it was interesting to read a few years later and realize how little the election of a Democratic president actually alters the basic difficulties of achieving drastic change. Lays out pretty clearly the evidence that, as the last sentence puts it, "It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing." Some good chapters on archaeological research documenting the huge influence climate changes (naturally-induced) had on previous civilizations.

On a lighter note, in a chapter on early history of climate science, I enjoyed the anecdote about Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius, whose dissertation in 1884 was judged by his committee as unimpressive, meriting only a fourth-class grade of "non sine laude". By 1903 he received a Nobel Prize for this work. I think I'll tell my students this tale -- if I give you a hard time about your dissertation, not to worry -- the next generation may value it more highly!

David Tranvik says

“It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing.” This quote demonstrates the overwhelming message that Kolbert is trying to convey in writing this book. She urges people to recognize the growing changes that are occurring on our planet and the need to address issue before for it is to late. Kolbert’s book provides unique facts and observation that allow her to come to the conclusion that global climate change is happening. She gathered information through a number travels throughout the world, various research projects, and with the help many experts. The wide variety of sources used demonstrate the enormous amount of effort she made in order for this book to serve as scientific research that should not go unread.
Throughout the book, Kolbert goes in depth on variety of issues that factor into global climate change and separates them into two distinct sections. The first part of book addresses how nature is affected by global climate change. She effectively starts the book talking about how different cultures and regions have been affected by an increase in temperatures. She gives many examples of these changes ranging from the increase in melting sea ice to the warming of permafrost around the Arctic. She explains the consequences and possible outcomes of these changes by describing their effects on the world. Then she clarifies how global climate change is not just a recent fad but has been studied since the middle of the nineteenth century. This allows the reader to understand that scientists have been developing the case for global climate change for hundreds of years and its possible negative affects if not dealt with it. After explaining the history of climate change she moves into more contemporary issues she discovered in her travels and research. One place she traveled was to a Swiss research camp on the Greenland ice sheet. During her time at the camp she learns how the temperature has been increasing steadily for the past ten years consequently melting the glacier at alarming rates. The conclusions she makes through her studies show the reader how climate change affects nature and what will happen in the future if there are no reforms.
While the first part of the book stresses the impact of global climate change on nature, the second section of the book discusses how mankind has and continues to cause global climate change. First, Kolbert talks about

how ancient civilizations have been driven to extinctions because of climate change. She shares this information almost in way to scare the reader that our society could be next. But Kolbert calms the nerves by emphasizing that our technology advancements will allow for us to adapt to these climate changes. Although technology advancements could potentially save us, she argues that as society and technology continues to progress the more damage we do to the environment. In support of her argument she stresses that emission levels need to be put into check by using new energy sources that are more environmental friendly. One way to combat emission is through the Kyoto Protocol but the United States rejected its proposal when President Bush said global warming needed more research and was not a “sound science." This angered Kolbert because she believed the facts were sufficient in stating that the United States produces nearly a quarter of the worlds total greenhouse gases. Through these examples it suggests that Kolbert wants the reader to understand that mankind is largely responsible for global climate change. It is through our ignorance and denial that is causing dramatic changes to our Earth.
In conclusion, Kolbert uses the Dutch chemist Paul Crutzen’s theory that humans are no longer live in the Holocene era but rather the Anthropocene era or the “age of man.” She rightly justifies this claim by the way humans have been transforming the earth to in order to fit our self-interests. She contends that if this philosophy is not reversed, the Earth will continue to spiral out of control. Overall, Kolbert intended Field Notes from a Catastrophe for the layperson in order to inform them about the realization of global climate change and she succeeded.

Kenneth says

This was more hard science than rhetoric which was welcome. Kolbert lays out the argument convincingly and compellingly. Because she is not daunted by the science, the argument comes across measured and deliberate - maybe even a bit understated at times - making it all the more effective. For anyone still harboring doubts about global warming, I'd like to think this book may well challenge their current thought processes.

Kolbert takes us on a voyage across Iceland and Greenland, glaciers in Alaska and more temperate zones in Western Europe to describe the already substantial effects of climate change. She claims, with admirable clarity, the consequences can already be felt on every continent, every country, by plants and animals alike. She also takes us on a brief history of the science of climate change and the political agendas that have followed.

There is the odd note of potential optimism towards the end. Overall, though, and especially if you read the edition with the updated 2009 afterword, you can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of despair, dread even, when you consider how little has been done to date and how very little is likely to be done in the near future to reduce the effects of global warming. It's abundantly clear there's no stopping it.

Isaac Baker says

This is a really good primer on climate change, the perfect gift for your conservative uncle who thinks climate change is a liberal conspiracy. Although he wouldn’t read it, which is why so many people still ignore this crucial issue: they don’t care about science and reality.

Published in 2006, I was struck over and over again by how little we have done to address climate change

since this book came out. It’s depressing is that some things are still the same. James Inhoffe, for example, is featured in this book, quoting Michael Chricton in defense of his climate change denial, calling climate change “the greatest hoax every perpetrated on the American people.” Today, idiots argue from the Senate floor, holding snowballs, that climate change isn’t real.

However, even though the Bush administration was terrible in terms of taking on climate change, at least they acknowledged it was real, where now an entire major political party has colluded to pretend it all isn’t happening.

Kolbert takes a broad view of climate change, tackling it from a variety of perspectives through a field notes approach. I won’t summarize them, but it’s impressive how many perspectives she’s able to incorporate into such a short and readable book. It’s well-written, conscientious and cautionary, a book everyone who cares about our planet should read.

The only negative thing I found in this book is Kolbert’s habit of introducing a new climate scientist or academic and immediately describing their eyes, their noses, etc., comparing them to some other famous person in some way. After the third or fourth instance, it started to get really old and formulaic, but luckily skippable. Other than that, this book is phenomenal. I just wish it were fiction and not reality.

Mark Stevens says

Elizabeth Kolbert’s "Field Notes From a Catastrophe" is more than ten years old (I read the 2006 edition) but don’t let that dissuade you from reading this brisk, concise overview of climate change and all the reasons we should be worried.

Very worried.

Kolbert zooms in and zooms out, from details to big-picture analysis. She visits the Alaskan village of Shismaref five miles off the coast of the Seward Peninsula. She heads to Swiss Camp, a research station on a platform drilled into the Greenland ice sheet. And, among other locations, she takes a look at the Monteverde Cloud Forest in north-central Costa Rica. Everywhere she goes are clear-eyed scientists doing their thing—observing, monitoring, measuring. And watching the world change under the pressures of global warming.

Everywhere Kolbert stops, the signs of change are abundant, unequivocal, unambiguous—all without being sensational. We are sloppy drunk on fossil fuels and show no interest in sobering up. Kolbert’s writing is matter-of-fact, understated, and calm. Published the same year as Davis Guggenheim’s An Inconvenient Truth was released (based on Al Gore’s talks on climate change), Kolbert’s narrative sounds the alarm in no uncertain terms, but it’s hardly a diatribe. Bitterness is buried in the brutal facts.

What is worrisome is to read this and know the data have only grown worse over the last decade, particularly with deniers backed by the billionaires who crowd the Oval Office, the backwards-thinking head of the EPA who scrubbed the agency’s website of any mention of climate change, and many of their backers and political supporters. The cautionary mention in Field Notes about increasing hurricane strength—the book was finishing up around the time of Hurricane Katrina—comes across as tame and quaint in the wake of Harvey, Irma and Maria during 2017.

Recently (Nov. 2, 2017), 13 federal agencies unveiled an exhaustive scientific report that blamed humans as

the dominant cause for creating the warmest period in the history of civilization. This “finding” is in direct conflict with the Trump administration’s position on climate change, but should we be encouraged by its publication? What will provoke our leaders to put some urgency behind the many steps that could be implemented to entice a new pattern of behavior and energy use?

It has been “business as usual,” for the most part, since Field Notes was published and Kolbert’s most devastating chapter underscores that even the introduction of various “stabilization wedges” won’t be easy to adopt. And might be too late, given the momentum that climate change has gained.

The "wedges" are things like solar power, wind power, nuclear power, cutting energy use in residential and commercial buildings by a quarter, or slashing automobile use in half and simultaneously doubling fuel efficiency. The “wedges” were developed by Robert Socolow, a professor of engineering at Princeton.

“All of Socolow’s calculations,” Kolbert writes, “are based on the notion—clearly hypothetical—that steps to stabilize emissions will be taken immediately, or at least within the next few years … The overriding message of Socolow’s wedges is that the longer we wait—and the more infrastructure we build without regard to its impact on emissions—the more daunting the task of keeping CO2 levels below 500 parts per million will become.” (We sailed right past 400 PPM last in March 2017).

Will we heat the atmosphere to the point where there are crocodiles at the poles, as there were in the Cretaceous? Seems like we’re headed there.

Maybe, if we can make "Field Notes" required reading in every high school today, we could begin to turn the trend around. Political pressure will be key to the pace at which we try to change our approach.

Right now, as Kolbert concludes, we are destroying ourselves. And doing precious little about it.

Stephen says

The only thing more hope-killing than reading Elizabeth Kolbert on climate change see also The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History is reading one of her books several years after publication, knowing no progress has been made. What she writes is impossible to deny. This book was published before The Sixth Extinction, then re-issued in 2014 with a few updates that only confirm the bad tidings. Trying to sum up the book here I went back to what I said about Sixth Extinction. *q.v.* Though this book precedes it, the pair summed leave me in 20o18 in despair.
"Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate"

Stacy Lewis says

Written before “The Sixth Extinction,” this book is very similar in topic but more limited in scope. Having finished it, I think I should send it to the president. But there are very few pictures and lots of big words.

Darlene says

This book, 'Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature and Climate Change' by Elizabeth Kolbert grew out of a three-part series she wrote for the 'New Yorker'. In this slim volume, Elizabeth Kolbert methodically explains the science of climate change and the warming temperatures of the earth. I think one of the most startling aspects of this book, for me, was learning that the study of climate change as it relates to the burning of fossil fuels actually dates back to the 19th century. This isn't new…

Ms. Kolbert starts with the history of the scientists who matter most in the study of the warming of the planet. The first scientist to make a contribution was an Irish physicist named John Tyndall. In the latter part of the 1850s, he began to study a variety of gases and is the person who identified what is now called the 'natural greenhouse effect'.

A Swedish chemist named Svante Arrhenius picked up the research where Tyndall left off. Arrhenius began painstakingly working out the effects of carbon dioxide (CO2) on global temperatures. He had been observing the rapid industrialization which was occurring across the world and began calculating how the earth's temperature would be affected by changing CO2 levels. Arrhenius recognized that industrialization and climate change were related and that the burning of fossil fuels over time would lead to the warming of the planet. He proposed an estimate of just how many years he thought it would take for this warming to occur…. he thought it would take 3,000 years of coal burning. Sadly and unfortunately, he was off in his calculations only by about 2,850 years.

Building on the science she provided, Elizabeth Kolbert then takes the reader on a journey with her to a number of places across the globe. She begins in the interior of Alaska, speaking with scientists about the thawing of the permafrost and how this is an indicator of global temperatures. She also travels to the ice sheets of Greenland and the jungles of Costa Rica… once again collecting data from scientists…. scientists who methodically describe the observations they have been making over time… painting a downright shocking picture of just how quickly the earth is warming and what the consequences will be for the many species who are on the brink of extinction and of course, for man and the world as we know it.

Although the information in this book is dated (the book was written almost a decade ago… which tells me that things are more dire than this book demonstrates!), I wanted to read it because it is an excellent source for understanding the science behind what has oddly become a controversial subject. This book was easy to understand … written in language which is highly accessible to people like me who are far from proficient in science.

If you have an interest in understanding this topic, I would highly recommend this book as a starting place.

My favorite quote…."It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself , but that is now what we are in the process of doing."

Jennifer Henschel says

Seriously scary stuff.

Peter says

To cite a well worn phrase, this is a must read to gain an insight and understanding of climate change..... (The updated and revised edition...)

Jake says

Field Notes from a Catastrophe, by Elizabeth Kolbert, studies the evidence for global warming and the consequences of global warming. She argues that global warming exists by looking at current and past research taking place all over the world in many different branches of science. She lays out the consequences of global warming in two groups. The first half of the book is directed toward what is happening to nature as a result of global warming and the second half describes what humans are doing in response to global warming.

In the first half of Elizabeth Kolbert's book, the evidence for global warming and the effects of global warming are examined. She uses mostly anecdotal and qualitative evidence from glaciology, climatology, biology, and alludes to a few other areas of research, to show what effect global warming is having on the earth. These effects include: changes of habitat (i.e. the thawing of the permafrost), the rise in the oceans due to glacier melt, and species movement, adaption, or even extinction due to changing ecosystems (i.e. a reduction of biodiversity). In this section, she also makes a convincing argument that excess greenhouse gasses from humans (gases such as CO2) are causing global warming.

The second half of Elizabeth Kolbert's book focuses on how humans will be affected by global warming and examines current endeavors to slow down the process. First, Kolbert explains that the climate has strongly affected human civilizations in the past, even causing some civilizations to end. Then, she examines how it may affect our present civilizations. For example, she explains that if the oceans rise, a lot of land that people now live on will be under water causing millions of refugees. This could cause food and water distribution problems and possibly spark armed conflict. The moral of the story: global warming will cause dire consequences in every aspect of human life. After explaining the possible impact on the environment that global warming could have, she examines some of the current movements and political actions that are being made to try and slow down global warming or, at least, to minimize the human impact on global warming. There has been mixed success in these solutions. There is technology that could reduce CO2 which, while available, is not practical. Governmental intervention would probably be most effective in reducing CO2, but some countries, like the United States and China, are unwilling to put limits on carbon emissions because of the possible impacts it could have on the economy. Finally, there has been some progress on the state or city level of government, but this is a small victory when countries like China and the federal U.S. government are unwilling to take serious action against global warming.

On the whole, I thought Field Notes from a Catastrophe was a well argued case to the general public showing that the extreme global warming we have observed is a result of human actions and it will end in serious consequences. I was quite impressed by the wide variety of evidence that Kolbert draws from; it is very rare that so many different branches of science from physics to glaciology are able to comment on one very specific subject--let alone agree on that subject. As a physicist, I wish that the evidence she had presented in the first half of her book was more quantitative than qualitative, but this might be because she was hoping to discuss the effects of global warming to a broad audience who may not necessarily be trained in reading complex scientific data. Also, it seemed to me that she made too strong of a distinction between the effects of global warming on nature versus the effects of global warming on humanity. I would have liked to have seen the effects of global warming on nature and humans more intertwined in the book, because humans are a part of nature—not separate from it.

Overall, I was impressed with the evidence presented in Elizabeth Kolbert's Field Notes from a Catastrophe and I would recommend this book to anyone who wishes to study the subject of global warming in more qualitative detail.

Elliott Bignell says

I pounded through this book in a couple of sittings, captivated by the sheer, physical impact of its descriptions of the reality of global warming out in the field. The author has been reporting on climate science and mixing with scientists for some time, and it shows. Whether out on the ice in Greenland, surveying butterflies in the Home Counties or at conventions with alarmed scientists and obfuscating politicians, Kolbert has actually been there.

If you know someone still trying to deny the threat of global warming, this book would make a good present for them. The descriptions of the reality on the ground are immediate and wrenching. In the Arctic, above all, the impacts are dramatic and undeniable - although "undeniable" encompasses territory many of us would once not have believed, it has to be admitted. Inuit communities are abandoning settlements where no more ice forms to travel on, roads and houses are disappearing into thermokarst fissures in Siberia and scientists are operating in pairs at ice stations where they can no longer walk safely for fear of falling through.

In the UK, records started in a Victorian spasm of amateurism show butterfly ranges racing Northward at 50km a year. In Costa Rica, amphibians are being driven up mountainsides until the peaks leave them nowhere to go but extinction. And all the time, CO2e emissions continue to burgeon. Indeed, the author added an afterword in 2009 which acknowledged greater political acceptance of the problem yet verged on despair at the accelerating rates of change. That was in 2009 - now, in 2012, is the weekend on which another massive drop in Summer sea ice will be declared as the new annual record. The first ice-free days at the Pole may be here in two or three years, but certainly in a decade.

The book, therefore, is paradoxically visceral and immediate in its impact yet already dated in its account. As one can hardly bring books out fast enough to keep up, and as the press has largely connived in obfuscating these events, this account deserves to be read anyway. Sterling scientific reportage.

Jamie says

It’s impressive how well Kolbert avoids doom and gloom. Neither does she understate the issue. She navigates the polemic (that’s been made false polemic), debunks the myths, observes from ground zero, outlines plans of action. It’s an excellent primer, well-researched and grounded. But ultimately, yeah: this was written ten years ago and we’re still not paying attention. Soon what happens next won’t be up to us.

Noah says

This book seems poorly-proportioned. It spends too many pages shoring up the existence of anthropogenic climate change and not enough time talking about the implications. Anyone open to the scientific premise isn't going to need 100 pages of proof before getting into the interesting part. Between assessments of the present and forecasts for the future, Kolbert also never pauses to explain exactly why this is a problem. I'm not a climate change skeptic by any means, but my biggest frustration is people who don't lay out the argument for why changing the earth at a geological level is either morally or practically unacceptable. Is it because it will dislocate coastal communities? Because it will wipe out animal species that are important to the ecosystem? Because it will lead to the extinction of man? Any or all of these might be true, but I'd like

for people not to just take the catastrophic nature of global warming as an article of faith and tell me so. The most interesting takeaway from this book is that there are a number of positive feedback cycles and trigger points that make the natural human tendency to think of global warming as a steady, linear process very dangerous. Kolbert makes a thorough case for why stored carbon in permafrost, the ice-albedo feedback loop, and other things will make the effects of global warming far more irregular and sudden than we appreciate.

Ted says

Elizabeth Kolbert was, still is I think, the main environmental writer for The New Yorker, though she writes of other things too, nowadays. This book was one of the first books I read on climate change, and is particularly convincing as it is based on actually observing what was going on in the Arctic, not on climate models, theoretical projections, or any such things as these (though I imagine that some of this stuff is mentioned in the book, I don't recall).

Kolbert is a fine writer, and although I suppose the book is somewhat out of date by now - the things she writes of have gone from bad to **much worse** - it is still a good introduction to climate change from the point of view of the Arctic, where things are changing fastest.

Numidica says

The content is not uplifting, but this message needs to be heard.

Women's National Book Association of New Orleans says

The Women's National Book Association sent this book to the White House today (March 9) in honor of Women's History Month: https://www.wnba-centennial.org/book-...

From the Women's National Book Association's press release:

In *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, Elizabeth Kolbert documents her travels around the world to sites already affected by man-made climate change, including Alaska, the Arctic, Greenland, and the Netherlands. Kolbert not only witnesses rising sea levels, altered patterns of migration, thawing permafrost, and thinning ice shelves, she also talks to scientists about what we can expect as these changes accelerate. In addition, she shows how Exxon Mobil and other companies have persistently tried to discredit scientists' warning about the dangers the Earth is facing. In 2012, Kolbert published an updated edition with the new subtitle, *Is Time Running Out?* This time her message is even more urgent, as she documents further changes and wonders if the catastrophic effects of climate change can still be stopped or at least mitigated. It is a sobering examination of the most important challenge the human race faces.

Kurt says

Prior to reading this I had read *The Weather Makers* by Tim Flannery. It was an excellent book full of

scientific explanations to nearly all the questions I had about the issue of climate change. *Field Notes From a Catastrophe* by Elizabeth Kolbert is also an excellent book. In fact, I wish I had read it first - not because it is the better of the two books, but because it is a better introduction to the subject.

Field Notes From A Catastrophe details the author's experiences as she traveled, met, and conversed with several leading authorities of the climate change issue. The first chapters explain some of the negative effects of climate change on nature, while the later chapters deal with how climate change has affected man and civilization in the past, how it will likely affect us in the future, and how political leaders are squandering the last few years we have left to make much of difference - all in order to appease their big-time cash contributors.

The author excels in letting experts in the field tell the story for her. For example, in explaining the devastating consequence of modest, but prolonged, local climate change to an ancient middle-eastern civilization the leading paleo-climatologist to study the case says, "The thing they couldn't prepare for was the same thing that we won't prepare for, because in their case they didn't know about it and because in our case the political system can't listen to it. And that is that the climate system has much greater things in store for us than we think."

I highly recommend this book. For more advanced scientific information about climate change many other good books are available (including *The Weather Makers*), but for an introduction to the subject this one is great.

Dorothy says

> “It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”
> ? Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked

That famous quote from Upton Sinclair seems highly appropriate to any discussion of climate change in this country. Entrenched, very powerful economic interests control our political system and, to a great extent, our media, and those interests are determined that business as usual shall prevail in the production and distribution of energy. In other words, petrochemical companies should be allowed to operate unchecked and unregulated. That this is a recipe for worldwide catastrophe is made quite clear in this slim book by science writer Elizabeth Kolbert.

Kolbert organizes her narrative as a series of travelogues to various parts of the world where the effects of global warming are made most evident. And so we visit the Alaskan interior, Iceland, and the Greenland ice sheet, as well as the mountains and meadows of Britain and Europe and the jungles of Costa Rica. We also get to meet the researchers in all these places who are working hard to understand the effects of a warming climate.

Kolbert also takes us back to the beginning of the study of climate and climate change in the 19th century where we meet Irish physicist John Tyndall who studied the absorptive properties of various gases and came up with the first accurate account of how the atmosphere functions.

We also meet Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius, who picked up where Tyndall left off and who later would win the Nobel Prize for his work on electrolytic dissociation. Arrhenius became curious about the effects of

carbon dioxide on global temperatures. He was apparently interested in whether falling levels of carbon dioxide might have caused the ice ages. He calculated how the earth's temperature would be affected by changing carbon dioxide levels. He was able to declare that rising levels of carbon dioxide would allow future generations "to live under a warmer sky."

Kolbert reviews some of the cultures that have suffered from or been destroyed by climate change in the past - for example, the classical Mayan civilization of the Yucatan and, even earlier, that of Akkad between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

This is all fascinating stuff for those of us who are interested in this issue, an audience which should include the entire human race. The information is presented in a comprehensive and succinct manner and in highly readable form. Kolbert has a knack for making complicated topics understandable.

The book was first published in 2006 in the middle of the George W. Bush presidency and one of the saddest chapters of the book is entitled "The Day After Kyoto" which begins with a conversation with Bush's Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky. Dobriansky attempts to explain and defend the adminstration's policy on climate change. What she actually does is repeat the same talking point over and over again.

Indeed, the history of the United States' handling of the problem of global warming has been mostly downhill since President George H.W. Bush acknowledged the problem and signed the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It has mostly been a history of denial of basic science and a refusal to act or to lead, as perhaps best exemplified by climate change denialist Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma.

In an afterword written in January 2009, Kolbert makes clear that business as usual continues and without U.S. leadership the problem of climate change cannot be solved. It seems unlikely that that will happen in the foreseeable future. The warnings of scientists like James Hansen continue to go unheeded and Earth continues to heat up. I finished this book feeling very depressed about the future prospects for survival of the human race.

Alicia says

Field Notes From A Catastrophe is an interesting book that calmly lays out the evidence to support the fact that the earth is now the warmest it has been in the past 420,000 years. She then goes on to talk about differing scientists viewpoints of what this might mean. At the core, all of the important scientists in the field agree that the warming means that the planet is on the edge of a major climate change. The main point of contention seems to be the time frame in which that will happen and how much longer we have before that outcome is irreversible.

Very nicely done without the alarmist tone that many writers on the subject develop (probably because the potential outcomes are alarming.)
