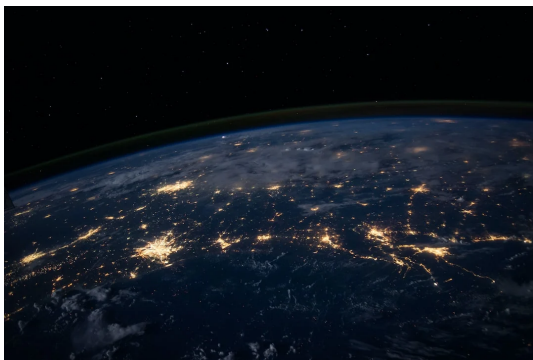


# IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Inspiring ↔ Informative ↔ Actionable

presented by



## Entering A New Era

Homo sapiens have only been on Earth for a short time, geologically speaking. In fact, if all of Earth's history was compressed into a single year, most of what we know and understand would begin in December. For example, dinosaurs were the dominant life form from mid-December to the day after Christmas. And, the first humans arrived in the evening of New Year's Eve. People alive today would have been born in the

last millisecond on December 31st. But in that very short span, humankind has dramatically and irreversibly changed the planet. This era, or epoch, is becoming widely referred to as the [Anthropocene](#).

The age of carbon, the age of nuclear weapons, and the age of plastics are all good contenders to become the "golden spike" needed to formally recognize a new era within the Holocene...one which marks humans as the perpetrator of drastic global changes that are forever documented in the geologic record.

Some might see this as a grand recognition of our power, but the hubris of this is unfortunate. Our ability to exact such radical change in a short hundred years or so also underscores our inability to foresee the consequences of our actions. Even worse may be the collective unwillingness to make changes to this destructive course. And that is why we are grateful to our readers demonstrating a desire to change course.

The actions of humankind have **fundamentally altered** the biological, chemical, and physical systems on **Earth** that we and all other organisms rely on for survival. Since the mid-1900's, these changes have been happening at a quicker pace, often referred to as the [Great Acceleration](#). Urbanization, deforestation, agriculture, industrialization, ocean acidification, habitat destruction, pollution and more have contributed to the radical changes happening in our lifetimes.

Planetary change caused by humans is more than an “inconvenient truth.” Past global changes have been the result of asteroids and extreme volcanic activity, but here we sit amid changes of our own doing and the historical geologic record may not help us navigate the future path forward. **No species has had such a wide impact with an awareness of doing so.**

*“Thus, in this case human-driven changes are well outside the range of natural variability exhibited by the Earth system for the last half-million years at least.”* (Quote taken from [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, 2015.](#))



Recognizing that we may be in uncharted territories provides us the opportunity to carve a new path forward. This path might begin with reinventing our consumerism-based society.

Thor Hansen, in his book [Hurricane Lizards and Plastic Squid](#), referred to biologist Gordon Orlans when asked what

a concerned citizen could do about climate change, Orlans said *“Everything you can.”* Some may suggest that the actions of an individual don’t add up and it is necessary that change comes from government intervention. However, a better argument is that addressing climate change **requires a fundamental shift** in our lifestyles, necessitating new behaviors and approaches that become part of our everyday culture. Hansen shared another quote that aptly sums up the potential we have to effect change organically: in the words of Edward Everett Hale, *“I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”*

All other species will strive to survive at any expense, it is time humans do the same. The definition of Anthropocene reminds us that the challenge we face is geological in scale, affecting the whole planet. We all need to realize that as this new era unfolds, there won’t be anywhere to hide. **Let’s focus on actions we can do now**, today, such as how we eat, shop, drive, travel, landscape, discuss, and vote. Make our voices heard and use the power of the wallet to exact the changes we need going forward to heal and sustain our only home, Earth.

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## **Feathers and Science**

The [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) begins in two days, February 16 and goes until February 19, 2024. Bird watching and reporting sightings is one of the oldest forms of community science and a super fun hobby for many folks. The beauty of bird watching is that it can be done anywhere: your backyard, balcony, a local park, on vacation, and even on a coffee break. Moreover, with the help of technology, we don’t even need to know our birds by sight or sound. The free [Merlin Bird ID](#) app can do it all for you, even keep your life list.



Photo by Laura Schare

Why participate in the bird count? Well, birds are bellwether species for the health of our ecosystems. Disappearing and declining bird populations is a sure fire way to know that things are not going well for the other plant and animal communities. And, it’s easier to see and count birds than bees or other insects.

Join in, sign up for bird walk with your local Audubon chapter, spend 10 minutes on one checklist, or do many throughout the period. However you choose to participate, we thank you, ornithologists thank you, and the birds do too.

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## Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



For you photographers out there, the [National Wildlife Federation photo contest](#) is open for submissions until March 31, 2024.



### Quote we're pondering

*"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people."* - **Franklin D. Roosevelt**



[All That Breathes](#) is an award winning documentary about two Indian brothers caring for and rehabilitating injured black kites in New Delhi, India.



This [CNN article](#) discusses the research and potential implications of a recent study about the slowing of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC). Keep abreast of the news as it unfolds and more experts weigh in.

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## Community Connections

We want to connect with you. In honor of Valentine's Day, please share a photo or story of love in nature.

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

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Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

**Every connection counts!** Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

Michael Hawk, Founder

Laura Schare, Editor

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### Jumpstart Nature

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