

Headline: Planet Earth and humankind in peril

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I don't remember any other period in recent memory when actual events showing the impact of environmental destruction and climate change have been as alarming as this year. In the past, mere projections on the potential consequences of global warming made some of us anxious about the future. This time, very troubling real occurrences should arouse us to be very disturbed and to be really worried.

The world's largest rainforest — the Amazon in Brazil — is considered as our planet's lungs because it supplies 20 percent of oxygen on Earth. It's home to an immeasurable number of species of flora and fauna. It has been fire-resistant for much of its history because of its natural moisture and humidity, according to scientists. But last week, news organizations reported that the Amazon is being gravely devastated by fires at a record rate.

CNN reported the following: there have been 72,843 fires in Brazil this year, with more than half in the Amazon region; more than 1½ soccer fields of the Amazon rainforest are being destroyed every minute of every day; smoke and ash from the fires have plunged into darkness Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, which is more than 1,700 miles away, and; smoke covers almost half of Brazil, even reaching neighboring countries like Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay.

CNN also reported about Alaska: the water is so hot in Alaska, it's killing large numbers of salmon; salmon are dying before they have the chance to spawn, and; the heat decreases the amount of oxygen in the water, causing salmon to suffocate and die with healthy eggs in their bellies.

Because of global warming, glaciers in Greenland, the Himalayas and Antarctica, and permafrost in Siberia, are melting at very alarming rates.

Forbes magazine wrote this month about Greenland: the glacier-covered island lost 12.5 billion tons of ice in just one particularly hot day this August; temperatures at the highest point of Greenland went above freezing point, causing a massive melting of its ice sheet, and; the ice sheet that covers Greenland contains enough ice that, if it melts, could raise sea level across the globe by more than 20 feet.

The National Geographic featured an article about Antarctica: the glaciers in Antarctica are crumbling and melting; in the past decades, some glaciers in Antarctica have been retreating shockingly quickly, with three glaciers losing about 100 billion tons of ice each year, and; warm water melts away the ice.

The New York Times published an article about the Himalayas: climate change is "eating" the glaciers, posing a grave threat to hundreds of millions of people who live downstream; Himalayan glaciers have lost a foot and a half of ice every year since 2000, and; in recent years, the glaciers have lost about 8 billion tons of water a year, and scientists point to rising temperatures as the biggest culprit.

The Himalayan glaciers feed rivers and lakes of so many countries in the Asian continent, including the two most populous countries of the world, India and China. Their loss would spell massive drought in agricultural lands, even in countries like Thailand and Vietnam where the Philippines

obtains most of its rice imports.

The New York Times wrote this month about Siberia and Russia: in Siberia, the permafrost — permanently frozen ground — is thawing, causing floods, disrupting animal migration patterns, destroying people's livelihood, wrecking houses and roads, and; in Russia, permafrost covers two-thirds of the country at depths ranging up to almost a mile.

US Sen. Bernie Sanders had sounded the biggest alarm in all of human history because of the threat to the very existence of humanity. Sanders declared that America has to go to war against climate change, and the response needed in this war should parallel the overnight and nationwide transformation that took place in his country after the Pearl Harbor attack in World War II.

The whole world should listen and countries should respond to the clarion call. It's a prescription urgently needed for the survival of humanity.

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