

Hi All,

I think the quote at missives end is my new favourite. This is the last chance to read an opinion piece addressing Tony Abbot's environmental policies as current issues.

Cheers

Brian

We can only ignore the soil crisis for so long

By [Geoffrey Lean](#)

12:24PM BST 02 Sep 2015

Just a handspan of earth lies between us and oblivion. Yet our Government is standing by as more of it is washed away every day



Try a DIY soil test to learn more about your soil Photo: Alamy

It's the environmental crisis nobody talks about, yet it's probably the most important one of them all. We rightly hear a lot about the dangers of air and water pollution, of loss of species, and of climate change, but the warnings rarely come – literally – down to earth.

Yet just a handspan of topsoil lies between us and oblivion, a veneer of fertility normally just six to ten inches deep overlying the unforgiving rock of the continents. And, worldwide, we are annually losing at least a staggering 30 billion tons of it, while an area three times the size of Switzerland goes out of production forever each year.

Geoffrey Lean pioneered the coverage of green issues long before they became fashionable and has won Scoop of the Year in the British Press Awards and the Martha Gelhorn Award for investigative journalism.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/agriculture/farming/11838959/We-can-only-ignore-the-soil-crisis-for-so-long.html>

Profit plans are just an erosion of Soil Con

ANDREW NORRIS
28 Aug, 2015 04:00 AM

Comments

1





Landowners could bear the brunt of the government's push for profit from Soil Conservation Services.

All it will end up doing is costing farmers more either for up front services or lost production

NEWS the state government is looking at how to shift the Soil Conservation Service from cost recovery to a profit centre is yet another example of where farmers will bear yet more environmental cost.

Since 1990, the service (which emerged as the Soil Conservation Act in 1938) has been operated commercially, but in a way which has meant farmers got access to remediation services and advice without cost to the public and without costing the farmer more than was needed to get the job done properly.

Reduced erosion and improved water quality benefit all of society, yet, as with issues such as native vegetation, the cost is borne by farmers and likely to worsen.

<http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/profit-plans-are-just-an-erosion-of-soil-con/2741555.aspx>

Land degradation costs the world up to \$10.6tn a year, report says

Study says effective land management will be critical in meeting sustainable development goals of alleviating poverty and ensuring long-term food security



In Inner Mongolia, China, a vast expanse of toxic waste is often whipped up by strong winds, dumping millions of tonnes of radioactive materials towards surrounding villages. Photograph: Frederic J Brown/AFP/Getty Images

Global development is supported by:

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

[Mark Anderson](#) and [Arthur Neslen](#)

Tuesday 15 September 2015 22.19 AEST Last modified on Tuesday 15 September 2015 22.21 AEST



Land degradation is costing the world as much as \$10.6tn every year, equivalent to 17% of global gross domestic product, a report has warned.

More than half of the world's arable land is moderately or severely degraded, according to [a report published on Tuesday by the Economics of Land Degradation \(ELD\) Initiative](#) (pdf). The report estimates the cost of this environmental destruction, not only from lost agricultural production and diminished livelihoods, but also from the lost value of ecosystem services formerly provided by the land, including water filtration, erosion prevention, nutrient cycling and the provision of clean air.

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/sep/15/land-degradation-costs-word-trillions-dollars-year-report-says>

Editorial

Soil Degradation: Will Humankind Ever Learn?

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(This article belongs to the Special Issue [Enhancing Soil Health to Mitigate Soil Degradation](#))

 [View Full-Text](#) |  [Download PDF](#) [2115 KB, uploaded 11 September 2015] |  [Browse Figures](#)

Abstract

Soil degradation is a global problem caused by many factors including excessive tillage, inappropriate crop rotations, excessive grazing or crop residue removal, deforestation, mining, construction and urban sprawl. To meet the needs of an expanding global population, it is essential for humankind to recognize and understand that improving soil health by adopting sustainable agricultural and land management practices is the best solution for mitigating and reversing current soil degradation trends. This research editorial is intended to provide an overview for this Special Issue of *Sustainability* that examines the global problem of soil degradation through reviews and recent research studies addressing soil health in Africa, Australia, China, Europe, North and South America, and Russia. Two common factors—soil erosion and depletion of soil organic matter (SOM)—emerge as consistent indicators of how “the thin layer covering the planet that stands between us and starvation” is being degraded. Soil degradation is not a new problem but failing to acknowledge, mitigate, and remediate the multiple factors leading to it is no longer a viable option for humankind. We optimistically conclude that the most promising strategies to mitigate soil degradation are to select appropriate land uses and improve soil management practices so that SOM is increased, soil biology is enhanced, and all forms of erosion are reduced. Collectively, these actions will enable humankind to “take care of the soil so it can take care of us”.

<http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/7/9/12490>

Turning unproductive soil into profits

🕒 06/09/2015 👤 Antonio 📁 Soil Science, Under research 📍 australia, microbiota, sandy soils, soil water repellency

☆☆☆☆☆ ⓘ Rate This

Preeti Roychand

**La Trobe University
AgriBio Centre for AgriBioscience
Melbourne, VIC, Australia**

Sandy soils in Western Australia are bad soils for growing plants due to their poor nutrients and water holding capacity (see an example in Figure 1). In general, these soils are water repellent, which leads to land degradation by increasing soil erosion risk and run-off rates. Nevertheless, these soils may be improved by clay addition, which leads to increase soil organic carbon content (Franzluebbers et al, 1996). Several ways have been used to increase soil organic carbon content in soils; i) no-tillage systems, ii) addition of bio char , iii) organic amendments or fertilizer addition and iv) switch to perennial plants. But there is another potential method for enhancing soil organic carbon storage in soils which has received little attention; mixing of isolated clay with sandy soils. [Continue reading →](#)

<https://gsoil.wordpress.com/2015/09/06/turning-unproductive-soil-into-profits/#more-2377>



What it feels like to be a scientist

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio

Sunday 13 September 2015 7:45AM [\(view full episode\)](#)

With funding cuts, pressure to publish and no guarantee of employment, being a scientist hardly seems worth it.

So who would make the case for becoming a professional woman (or man) of science? Len Fisher boldly sallies forth.



IMAGE: BEING A SCIENTIST MEANS A COMMITMENT TO A VARIETY OF SKILLS, AND VIRTUES (PHILIP MCMASTER - FLICKR/CC BY-NC 2.0)



Sundays 7:45am

Presented by Robyn Williams

2 0 0

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/what-does-it-feel-like-to-be-a-scientist/6765454>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/ron-tandberg-20090910-fixc.html>

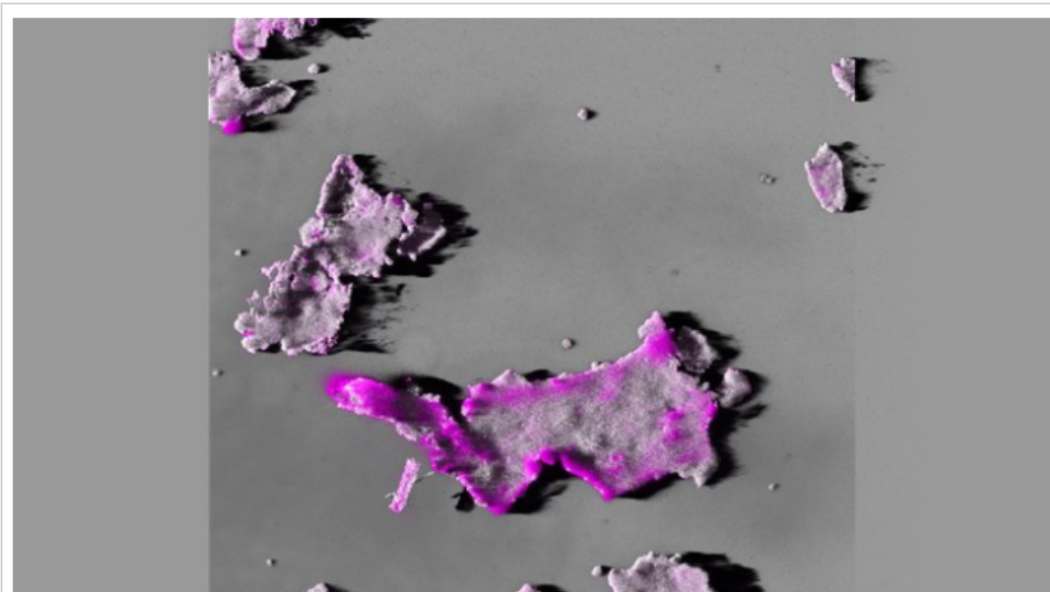
Fire and soil microorganisms: where should we focus on?

🕒 06/05/2015 👤 Antonio 📁 Biogeosciences, Soil Science, The soil under our boots, Under research
🔗 microbiota, wildfires

★★★★★ 2 Votes

Gema Bárcenas-Moreno
University of Seville, Sevilla, Spain

Currently, the complexity of soil microbial ecology on soil systems is a hot topic in the environmental sciences, since the scientific community has achieved a deep knowledge of the relevance of microorganisms in soil processes. After several decades of study of the effects of wildfires on soils, one of the main conclusions is that soil microbial populations are very sensitive to fire, which allows us to use them as a tool to assess the impact of fire on ecosystems.



<https://gsoil.wordpress.com/2015/05/06/fire-and-soil-microorganisms-where-should-we-focus-on/>

It's time to stop thinking in terms of food versus fuel

How farmers can sustainably, and affordably, meet humanity's growing demand for food, fuel



Biofuel crops are grown at the University of Illinois.

Credit: Don Hamerman

Whether you have taken a side or a backseat in the discussion, the "food versus fuel" debate affects us all. Some say growing more biofuel crops today will decrease greenhouse gas emissions, but will make it harder to produce food tomorrow, which has prevented the U.S. from maximizing the potential of environmentally beneficial biofuels.

Story Source:

The above post is reprinted from [materials](#) provided by **Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**. *Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.*

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/09/150914124704.htm>

The REAL cost of soil erosion

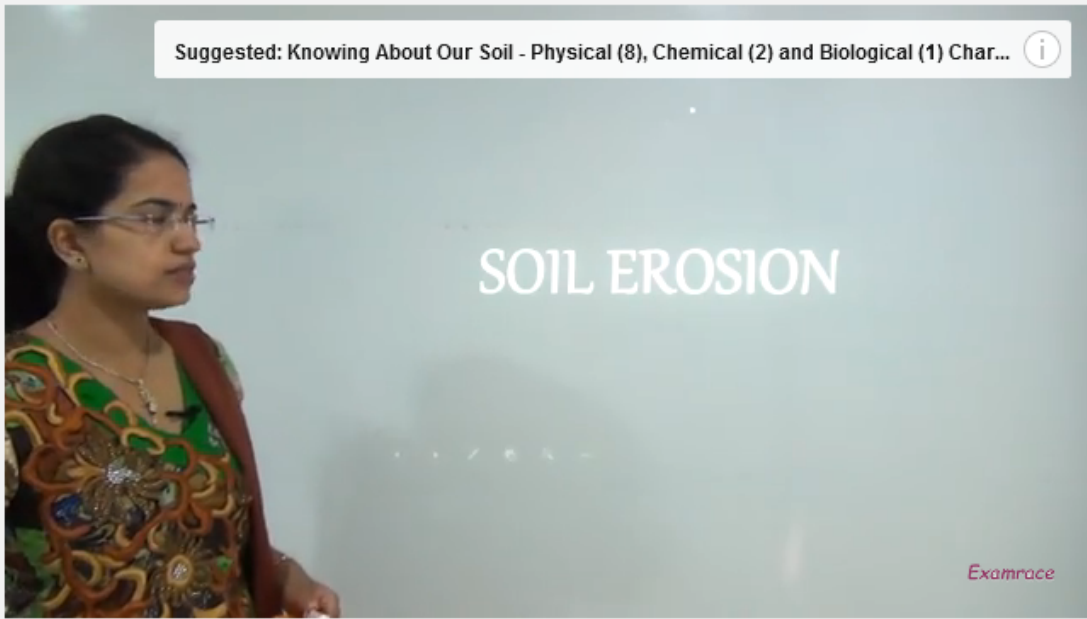
Do you know what 'menace' Nebraska farmers are still battling? Soil erosion. Even after widespread adoption of no-till and other modern farming methods, soil erosion is still a big problem in many areas.

Hugh Hammond Bennett was the first Chief of the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS). He is widely known as the "Father of Soil Conservation," and is credited with

creating a strong public interest in reducing the problem of soil erosion back in the 1930s.

Erosion happens when soil is not adequately covered to protect it from water and wind. When uncovered soil particles become detached and are washed or blown away, soil health declines, and other resources are negatively impacted such as water and air quality. Bennett observed how soil erosion reduced the ability of land to sustain agricultural productivity, and that is still a problem for many producers today.

http://www.midwestproducer.com/news/opinion/the-real-cost-of-soil-erosion/article_d25aa4ba-4817-11e5-a88e-6be05f859dbf.html



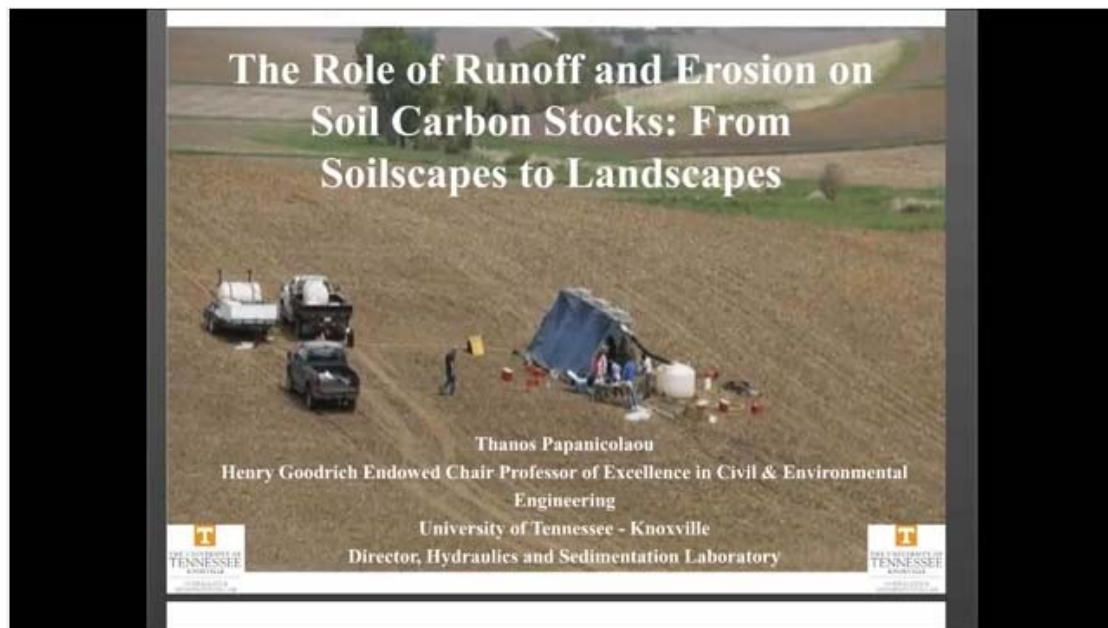
Suggested: Knowing About Our Soil - Physical (8), Chemical (2) and Biological (1) Char... ⓘ

SOIL EROSION

Examrace

Arresting Soil Erosion - Visualizing its Causes , Effects and Conservation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3ygQd9nnE0>



Webinar - The Role of Runoff and Erosion on Soil Carbon Stocks (8/2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgaAx13CTeQ>

The Other Soil Erosion: Long-Term Erosion of Our Productive Farmland Base from U.S. Population Growth

Introduction – Appreciating the Land That Feeds Us

In the new century, sustainable agriculture has become a buzzword of sorts, and fresh, healthy (preferably organic), locally-grown food is an ideal if not a mantra. In the Mid-Atlantic States, for example, the popular retro restaurant chain Silver Diner (with 15 restaurants in Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey) reoriented itself several years ago to emphasize “fresh & local ingredients,” mirroring a nation-wide trend that is especially evident among younger consumers.



<http://www.npg.org/library/forum-series/the-other-soil-erosion-long-term-erosion-of-our-productive-farmland-base-from-u-s-population-growth.html>



Odds keep rising for a big El Niño in 2015

August 11, 2015 6.12am AEST

The large 1982 El Niño contributed to the Ash Wednesday bushfires that killed 75 people in south east Australia. Sydney Oats/Wikimedia, CC BY

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[El Niño has arrived](#), it's getting stronger, and it's not about to go away soon. And already there are [rumblings](#) that this could be a big one. El Niño in Australia means warmer temperatures, and sometimes, but not always, drier conditions.

In 2014, some climatologists thought a [big El Niño](#) might have been on the cards. Ultimately, after some vigorous early warming in the Pacific, conditions only touched on El Niño thresholds. This year, with an event already established, climatologists are suggesting the odds are rising of an El Niño rivalling the record events of 1982 and 1997.

https://theconversation.com/odds-keep-rising-for-a-big-el-nino-in-2015-45151?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+August+11+2015+-+3232&utm_content=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+August+11+2015+-+3232+CID_b84a6ca33a24407866f3d2ef422dea35&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Odds%20keep%20rising%20for%20a%20big%20El%20Ni%20in%202015





<https://ecologyfieldreports.plos.org/what-will-you-do-when-you-get-there-making-sense-of-climate-change-induced-range-shifts-5a3dc1ee7216?gi=2f520496c724>



Big Ideas

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Psychology of climate change

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio

Monday 14 September 2015 8:05PM [\(view full episode\)](#)

Kevin Rudd once called **climate change** the great "moral challenge" and wanted to introduce an emissions trading scheme. Tony Abbott came to power promising to scrap the carbon tax. Much has changed over the years, but what are Australians thinking about climate change right now? How significant is climate change denial? Can we avert more than 2 degrees of global warming? What action should we take? And what are the impediments to climate change action? Paul Barclay speaks with public intellectual, Clive Hamilton, former politician Carmen Lawrence, and David Ritter of Greenpeace. Recorded at the Byron Bay Writers Festival.



IMAGE: REDUCING AUSTRALIA'S RELIANCE ON COAL IS A MAJOR CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE. (HAMISH BLAIR / GETTY IMAGES)



Monday to Thursday 8pm
Repeated: Tuesday to Friday 3am
Presented by Paul Barclay

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/psychology-of-climate-change/6772110>

Assessing Farmers' Perception of Soil Erosion Risk in Northern Jordan

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Open Access

Abstract

Socioeconomic factors and farmer's perception of soil erosion and conservation were examined with special reference to Wadi Kufranja catchment, northern Jordan. Field data were collected through a household field survey, and soil erosion loss was calculated and mapped using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE), within a GIS/RS environment. *In-situ* field measurements of soil erosion were also conducted to assess splash, sheet and runoff soil erosion. The estimated potential average annual soil loss is 10 ton·ha⁻¹ year for the watershed. 42.1% (5317.23 ha) of the watershed area was estimated to have moderate soil loss (5 - 25 ton·ha⁻¹·years⁻¹). Soil erosion risk is severe to extreme over 31.2% (3940.56 ha) of the catchment, whereas the calculated soil loss is 25 - 50 and >50 ton·ha⁻¹·year⁻¹. The measured sheet and splash soil erosion in W. Kufranja was 10 ton·ha⁻¹·year⁻¹ from tillage land, and 3 ton·ha⁻¹·year⁻¹ from the fallow land, with an average ranges from 8 to 10 ton·ha⁻¹·year⁻¹. Similarly, the maximum measured soil erosion on

www.scirp.org/journal/PaperDownload.aspx?paperID=59267

4 essentials for sustaining agriculture

17August2015 [Andrew McGuire](#) [Commentary](#) [fertilizer](#), [pest control](#), [soil](#), [sustainable agriculture](#), [Water use](#)

As an irrigated cropping systems [agronomist](#) I work on ways to sustain agriculture. In doing this, I have come to realize that there are certain requirements that agriculture must meet to produce food and to keep producing food (yes, fiber too, and other non-food products, but mainly we are concerned with food production).

Here are my essentials for sustaining agricultural production:

1. Protect the soil
2. Maintain soil fertility
3. Use water efficiently
4. Protect the crop

I view these as a hierarchy: if #1 is not met, the lower requirements do not mean much, but once #1 has been met, we can move to #2, provided that does not threaten #1, and so on. Each component is required, but not sufficient; all of them are needed. Below, I elaborate on each requirement.

<http://www.biofortified.org/2015/08/sustaining-agriculture/>

Forests survive without people

2 September 2015 at 12:27pm

By KAMCILLA PILLAY



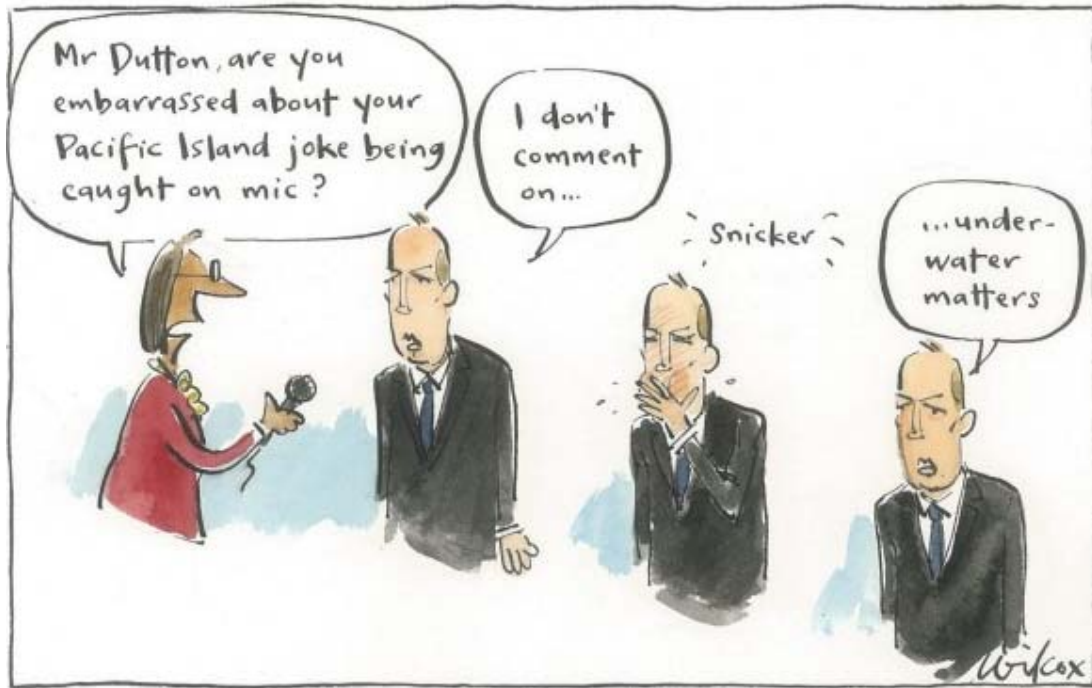
Plantations are a threat to land, water and biodiversity, says an activist. Picture: Timberwatch.org
Environmentalists have been accused of not seeing the wood for the trees by commercial foresters in the decades-long debate between the two groups. As Durban readies itself to host the 14th World Forestry Congress next week and with Arbor Week currently under way, Kamcilla Pillay enlisted the help of experts to examine the arguments

Activist group Timberwatch Coalition's tree expert and co-ordinator, Wally Menne, says large-scale timber plantations are a threat to land, water and biodiversity that indigenous people in southern Africa need for survival.

But the authorities regard plantations as forests.

"In the course of establishing these plantations, irreplaceable grassland has been destroyed, water resources and soil quality detrimentally affected, communities displaced and impoverished, and the use of chemical insecticide, herbicide and toxic fertilisers has destroyed native plants, insects and small mammals," he said.

<http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/opinion/forests-survive-without-people-1.1909517>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photoalbum/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>

With a nip and a bit of tuck Turnbull can bring a touch of green to Direct Action

The Coalition's climate policy holds a hidden key which will allow its new leader to set tougher baselines that emitters are not allowed to exceed



Thirsty country: in 2009 Malcolm Turnbull described the Coalition's climate policy as 'a recipe for fiscal recklessness on a grand scale'. Photograph: David Gray/Reuters

[Lenore Taylor](#)

Tuesday 15 September 2015 11.30 AEST Last modified on Tuesday 15 September 2015 11.54 AEST

[Malcolm Turnbull](#) once said he didn't want to lead a party that wasn't as committed to climate action as he was. Now he does.

Climate policy cost Turnbull the Liberal leadership in 2009 when he backed Kevin Rudd's emissions trading scheme. He had to promise not to try to reintroduce an emissions trading scheme to gather the support he needed to win it back.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/15/with-a-nip-and-a-bit-of-tuck-turnbull-can-bring-a-touch-of-green-to-direct-action>

Conservatives across the world are tackling climate change - will Turnbull?

OPINION

By [Ben Oquist](#)

Posted Tue at 3:45pm Tue 15 Sep 2015, 3:45pm



Photo: If Turnbull wants to turn the economy around, he must support the industries that are creating jobs. (AAP: Dean Lewins)

Tony Abbott failed to move with global shifts in conservative thinking about climate change. The new Prime Minister has a chance to rectify this, writes Ben Oquist.

Malcolm Turnbull declared that Tony Abbott had failed on economic leadership. Australia's future, Turnbull said last night, is to be a nation that is "agile, that is innovative, that is creative".

Indeed, instead of addressing future economic challenges, Abbott focused on a Queensland coal mine as an economic solution and declared war on the environment movement.

Ben Oquist is the executive director of The Australia Institute.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-15/oquist-turnbull-has-a-chance-to-embrace-the-new-economy/6777282>

A splash of climate hope as Turnbull knifes Abbott

Sara Phillips ABC Environment 15 Sep 2015



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at a press conference on 14th September.

Malcolm Turnbull has toppled the party leader and sitting Prime Minister to assume the top job. For Australians worried about climate change, there's hope he'll be stronger on climate than his predecessor.

IT'S AN UNDIGNIFIED way to start a Prime Ministership. Malcolm Turnbull, Australia's newest Prime Minister, obtained the top job in the same manner as Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd (Mark 2). He forced a vote on party leadership which overthrew the sitting Prime Minister.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/09/15/4312889.htm>



Polar invasion: how plants and animals would colonise an ice-free Antarctica

September 15, 2015 3.33pm AEST

Tom Hart, Author provided

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Antarctica's ice sheets could [totally collapse](#) if the world's fossil fuels are burnt off, according to a recent climate change simulation. While we are unlikely to see such a dramatic event any time soon, we are already observing big changes and it's worth considering what the worst case scenario might look like for the continent's ecosystems. How long before Antarctica turns into grassy tundra?

Authors



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<http://theconversation.com/polar-invasion-how-plants-and-animals-would-colonise-an-ice-free-antarctica-47369>

Australia has let down our neighbours in the Pacific

Larissa Waters ABC Environment 10 Sep 2015



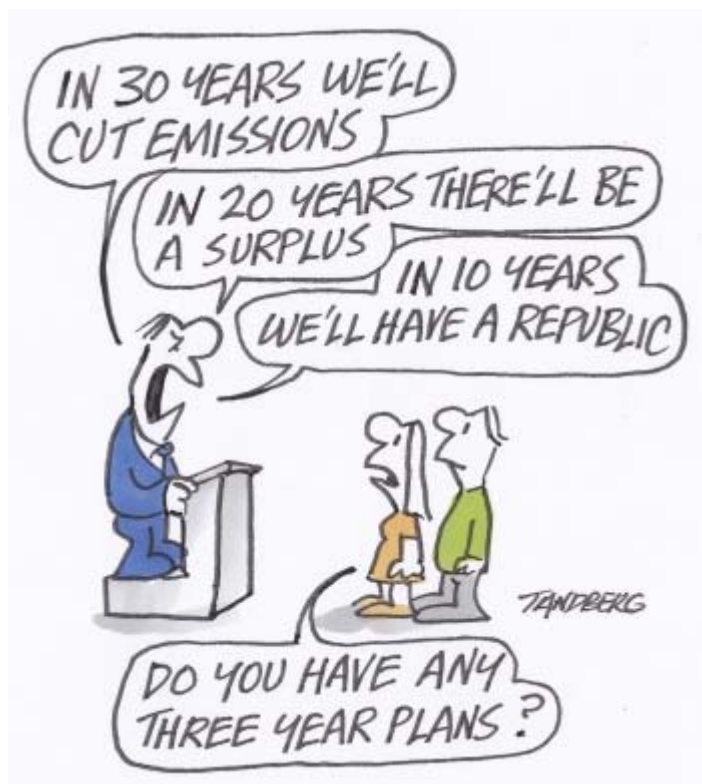
Tony Abbott is set to come under pressure from Pacific leaders to do more on climate change. *Credit: Mick Tsikas (AAP)*

Our Pacific neighbours will be some of the worst affected by climate change. Yet the Australian government clings to outdated ideas on coal.

PRIME MINISTER Tony Abbott has personally backed a plan to dig up hundreds of millions of tonnes of coal from Queensland's Galilee Basin. This would see the number of coal ships travelling through the Great Barrier Reef and past Papua New Guinea dramatically jump.

Larissa Waters is an Australian Greens senator for Queensland and a deputy leader of the party.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/09/10/4309937.htm>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/ron-tandberg-20090910-fixc.html>

Abbott's hyperbole doesn't match reality

OPINION

By [Mungo MacCallum](#)

Updated 25 Aug 2015, 12:19pm Tue 25 Aug 2015, 12:19pm



Photo: [Tony Abbott's latest wedge on the environment employs hyperbole without restraint or limit. \(Jane Norman\)](#)

Our bellicose Prime Minister has figured out his latest wedge on environment and trade, but the problem is his line of attack against everyone from Bill Shorten to unions to environmentalists doesn't always stack up, writes Mungo MacCallum.

Once again our creative Prime Minister has devised a bold and imaginative solution. Now it just remains to discover a credible problem to go with it.

Tony Abbott's latest wedge, to shut down the protection of the environment from its friends and restrict it to the immediate neighbours is spun as the desperate need to protect fragile mining developments from vigilante litigation, green saboteurs, economic treason - the hyperbole is without restraint or limit.

[Mungo MacCallum](#) is a political journalist and commentator.



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'Knowing the change in average rainfall is not enough to understand the change in intense rainfall. In fact changes in variability often have a greater impact on extremes,' says Nicholas Watkins. (Credit: * zoute/Flickr)

IN SCOTLAND, DOWNPOURS BRING 50% MORE RAIN

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK [Original Study](#)

Posted by [Tom Frew-Warwick](#) on September 16, 2015

You are free to share this article under the [Attribution 4.0 International](#) license.

Researchers looked at 63 years of European rainfall data and found changes in the character of rainfall in many locations. In Scotland, for example, the old adage "it never rains but it pours" has become truer than ever.

<http://www.futurity.org/rain-scotland-1004792-2/>

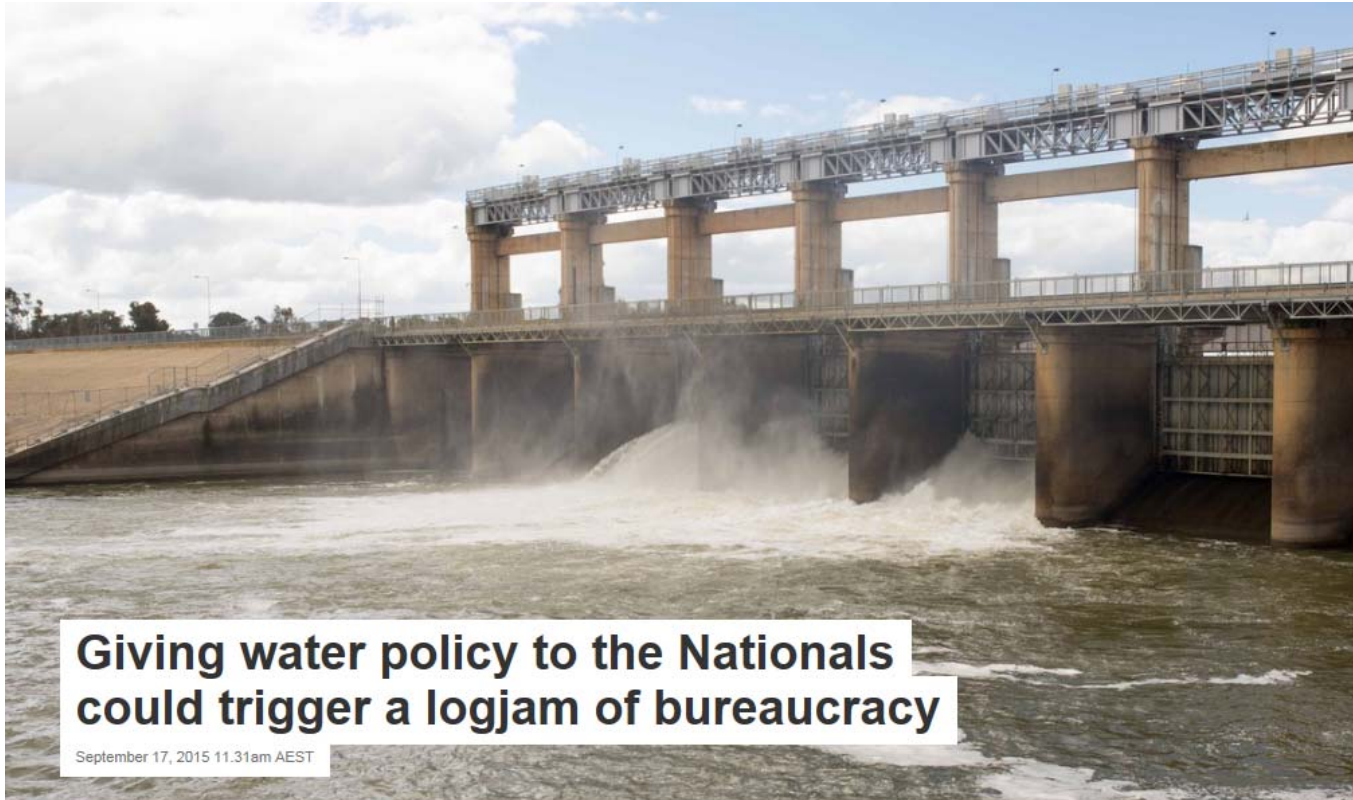
Greens' sneaky portfolio reshuffle upsets NSW branch

[Josh Taylor](#) | 17 Sept 2015 12:59PM



What were the Greens doing while all eyes were on Tony Abbott?

Greens leader Richard Di Natale's decision to strip Lee Rhiannon and Janet Rice of some portfolios to give to new senator Robert Simms has upset some in the party, particularly because it was announced under the cover of the change of prime minister. At the same time, Di Natale decided to give the schools portfolio to Christine Milne's <http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/09/17/greens-sneaky-portfolio-reshuffle-upsets-nsw-branch/>



Giving water policy to the Nationals could trigger a logjam of bureaucracy

September 17, 2015 11.31am AEST

The Murray-Darling: a complex river system with a complex set of regulations to match. AAP Image/Caroline Duncan Photography

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In coming to a renewed coalition agreement with the National party, new prime minister Malcolm Turnbull has [reportedly agreed](#) that matters relating to water will move into the agriculture portfolio, although the exact details of what has been agreed are yet to be announced.

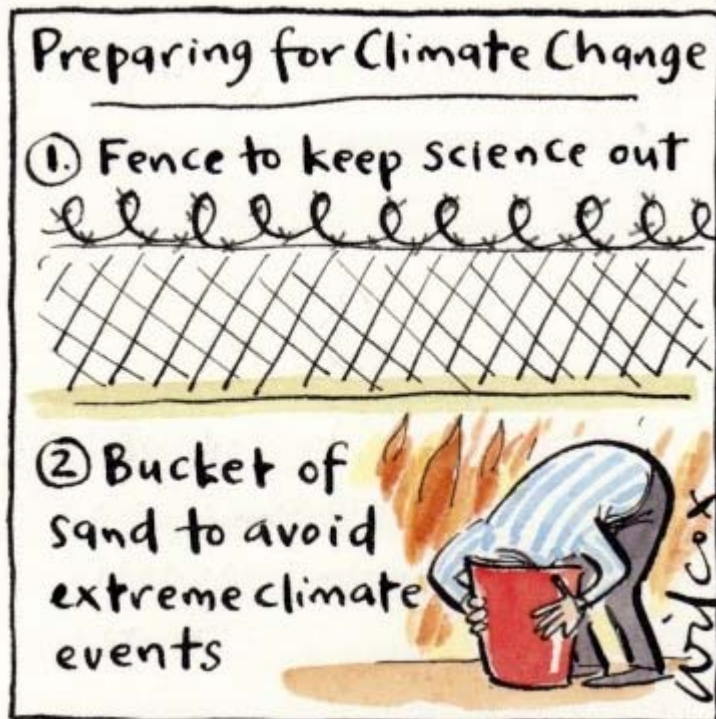
Author



James Horne

Visiting Fellow in public policy/water, Australian National University

<http://theconversation.com/giving-water-policy-to-the-nationals-could-trigger-a-logjam-of-bureaucracy-47637>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>

E360 VIDEO CONTEST AWARD WINNER — FIRST PLACE



Bitter Wind: A Town Divided Over A Controversial Maine Wind Farm

The winning entry in the 2015 Yale Environment 360 Video Contest explores the competing economic interests and sharply divergent worldviews that emerge over plans to erect wind turbines on a scenic ridgeline in Maine. Videographer Roger Smith captures both sides of a debate that divides a rural New England community.

Watch the video

http://e360.yale.edu/feature/bitter_wind_a_town_divided_over_a_controversial_main_e_wind_farm/2907/

Stopping fracking won't stop climate change

[Bryony Worthington](#)

I am neither pro nor anti-fracking, but green campaigners must look beyond future threats and tackle the present impacts of fossil fuels if we are to combat climate change



Families at an anti-fracking protest in Barton Moss, Salford, UK. Photograph: Barbara Cook/Demotix/Corbis

Wednesday 16 September 2015 01.54 AEST
Last modified on Wednesday 16 September 2015 20.20 AEST

I am resigning as a shadow minister in the Lords in a few weeks. Not because Jeremy Corbyn is Labour's new leader but because I decided, after the general election, that I could have a bigger impact reducing the growing risk of climate change in a different, more internationally-focused role.

Judging from my Twitter feed and inbox this will delight many who have made it their mission to oppose fracking in the UK.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/15/stopping-fracking-wont-stop-climate-change>

We're turning our land to sand

Luc Gnacadja ABC Environment



Drought master cattle on the move, Ulcanbah Station, west of Collinsville. Australia makes good use of its dryland areas. *Credit: Paula Heelan (User submitted)*

While concerns about food security grab headlines, one of the key drivers of the problem is overlooked. No one seems to notice that good farm land is being lost to the desert winds.

ON SUNDAY IT WAS THE World Day to Combat Desertification and I suspect the term desertification will conjure up images of expanding deserts or shifting sand dunes. This is what I often hear, followed, almost predictably by the statement, "why should I care since we cannot do much about it."

Luc Gnacadja is the Executive Secretary of the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) headquartered in Bonn, Germany.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2012/06/19/3527907.htm>

06 AUG 2015: OPINION

Undamming Rivers: A Chance For New Clean Energy Source

Many hydroelectric dams produce modest amounts of power yet do enormous damage to rivers and fish populations. Why not take down these aging structures, build solar farms in the drained reservoirs, and restore the natural ecology of the rivers?

BY JOHN WALDMAN AND KARIN LIMBURG

Hydroelectric power is often touted as clean energy, but this claim is true only in the narrow sense of not causing air pollution. In many places, such as the U.S. East Coast, hydroelectric dams have damaged the ecological integrity of nearly every major river and have decimated runs of migratory fish.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Waldman, a professor of biology at Queens College, New York, works on the evolution of anadromous fish and historical ecology, and

waterways. **Karin Limburg** is a professor of environmental biology at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She studies human impacts on watersheds, rivers, estuaries, and coastal oceans, particularly effects on fishes.



http://e360.yale.edu/feature/undamming_rivers_a_chance_for_new_clean_energy_source/2901/



Air pollution causes more than 3 million premature deaths a year worldwide

September 17, 2015 6:16am AEST

Traffic is one of the major sources of pollution worldwide, particularly in Asia's packed cities. EPA/Diego Azubel/AAP

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Outdoor air pollution causes more than 3 million premature deaths a year, according to a [study published today in Nature](#). The researchers, led by Jos Lelieveld of the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz, Germany, estimated that in 2010, 3.15 million people worldwide died from exposure to airborne fine particles, with another 150,000 dying from ozone air pollution.

These deaths are in addition to the estimated [3.54 million deaths per year associated with indoor air pollution](#), mainly through the use of solid fuel for cooking and heating in non-industrialised countries.

Authors



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<http://theconversation.com/air-pollution-causes-more-than-3-million-premature-deaths-a-year-worldwide-47639>



"Our results underline the critical importance of halting the conversion of contiguous forests to farmland," says David Edwards. "If we fail to do so then we will see a vast array of the world's most evolutionary distinct birds become extinct." (Credit: Jei Pov/Flickr)

TURNING FORESTS INTO FARMS WIPES OUT TROPICAL BIRDS

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD [+](#) Original Study

Posted by [Sean Barton-Sheffield](#) on September 14, 2015

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Tropical birds are facing an extinction crisis due to forests being converted into farmland, say experts, who warn that more than 650 million years of evolutionary history may be lost.

<http://www.futurity.org/forests-farms-tropical-birds-1001962/>

Enough talk over fire prevention

Posted By: **Andrew Norris** on 8/08/2015 4:00:00 AM | Comments (2)



We keep winding up in the same place when each catastrophic fire season comes around

UNLIKE drought, which creeps through the boundary fence and quietly eats away at each individual's business and the social well being of towns out of the government's sight, a firestorm razes all in its path, making it impossible to ignore.

Media attention attracts politicians like moths to a flame to express empathy and explain all the government is doing to fight the fires.

Yet, we're still reactively focused instead of being proactive.

<http://www.stockandland.com.au/blogs/a-matter-of-opinion/enough-talk-over-fire-prevention/2739452.aspx>



China's smog kills more than a million each year – but there's a clearer road ahead

September 17, 2015 3.06am AEST

Kim Kyung Hoon / Reuters

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Air pollution is rarely a major concern for most people in Western Europe. You seldom notice it except when sitting in heavy traffic or when it obscures the far horizon at a scenic spot.

However until the middle of last century it was a different story, with heavy industry and domestic heating filling city air with smoke, noxious

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Disclosure statement

<http://theconversation.com/chinas-smog-kills-more-than-a-million-each-year-but-theres-a-clearer-road-ahead-47600>

Stations reverse degradation

13 Sep, 2015 04:00 AM  A+ A-

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HOW are farmers restoring and conserving their soils? That's the question that Soils for Life seeks to answer by collating outstanding land management practices from around Australia.

Soils for Life was developed by the former governor-general, Major General the Hon. Michael Jeffery, out of his concern that Australia's productive soils are not being universally well managed.

<http://www.stockandland.com.au/news/agriculture/livestock/general-news/stations-reverse-degradation/2743105.aspx>




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"This is not just unprecedented over 80 years—it's unprecedented over 500 years," says Valerie Trouet. (Credit: iStockphoto)

SIERRA NEVADA SNOWPACK LOWEST IN 500 YEARS

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  Original Study

Posted by [Mari Jensen-Arizona](#) on September 15, 2015

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Snowpack in California's Sierra Nevada in 2015 was at the lowest level in the past five centuries, according to a study of blue oak tree rings.

<http://www.futurity.org/sierra-nevada-snowpack-drought-1003402/>

24 AUG 2015: OPINION

In Clash of Greens, a Case for Large-Scale U.S. Solar Projects

Weaning the U.S. economy off fossil fuels will involve the wide deployment of utility-scale solar power. But for that to happen, the environmental community must resolve its conflict between clean energy advocates and those who regard solar farms as blights on the landscape.

BY PHILIP WARBURG

If the United States and the world community hope to avoid the worst effects of climate change, solar power will have to play a pivotal role in electricity production. The technology is quickly maturing, and the price of solar panels has plummeted to the point where new utility-scale solar installations are a sound investment, cheaper than new coal plants and frequently competitive with natural gas. In 2014, solar power accounted for almost a third of all new U.S. electric generating capacity. If the right policies are adopted, solar power could be the leading source of electricity worldwide by 2050, according to the International Energy Agency.

http://e360.yale.edu/feature/in_clash_of_greens_a_case_for_large-scale_us_solar_projects/2905/



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Philip Warburg has written two books: *Harnessing the Wind*. He is a member of the U.S. Environmental Conservation

New England's leading environmental lawyer from 2003 to 2009. Previously, he was with the Union for Environmental Defense. He is also an attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund in Washington, DC.



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What Pope Francis Should Say in His Upcoming UN Address

Pope Francis will speak to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 25 about nuclear energy and climate change.



Australia is among the most liveable nations, but it lags other countries on sustainability

September 17, 2015 6.16am AEST

Australia's prodigious coal output is one of the factors that count against it in a new appraisal of sustainability among OECD nations. John Englart/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

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Australia may be one of the most [liveable places](#) in the world, but a [new report](#) ranks us in the middle when it comes to sustainability.

Of the 34 OECD countries, Australia ranked 18th. The report compared OECD countries' performance against the new Sustainable Development Goals, to be formalised in New York at the end of this month.

The top five countries were Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and

Author



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Disclosure statement

<http://theconversation.com/australia-is-among-the-most-liveable-nations-but-it-lags-other-countries-on-sustainability-47572>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/matt-golding-20090907-fdh2.html>

"Just a handspan of topsoil lies between us and oblivion" -- Geoffrey Lean--