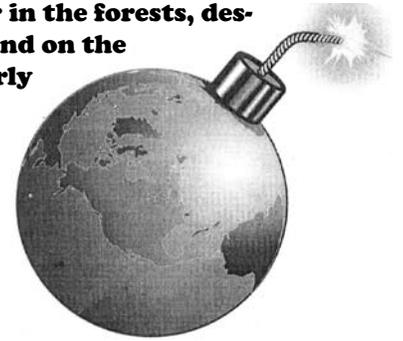


Climate Justice: New Directions in Radical Ecological Action

The time is long overdue for radical ecologists to move climate change to the forefront of our actions. Our love for wild places and the traditional focus of environmental activism on place-based actions blinds us to the fact that the single greatest threat to biodiversity is no longer in the forests, deserts, mountains or seas, but on the highways, in the coalfields and factories, and on the industrial ranchlands. Moreover, climate chaos has strong connections to nearly every contemporary social movement, and as such it provides an important and under-utilized avenue for bringing a biocentric analysis to many societal problems. Equally important, climate action is inextricably linked to global corporate control, presenting important opportunities for campaigning that go beyond political lobbying and reform.

It's time to do a serious reevaluation of environmentalist strategy and tactics in the broadest sense possible. The idea that wilderness protection begins and ends in the forest needs to be debunked. At some point in the '90s green radicalism became synonymous with treesits, road blockades and backwoods sabotage. Tree perches and road encampments were front-page news, a mecca for propaganda and earth-centered thinking, a breeding ground for new tactics and strategies, and a symbol of hope for thousands of people. But, at least on the West Coast, 20 years of this has long past a point of diminishing returns.



CONTINUED INSIDE...

A Call to Action from Rising Tide North America
www.risingtide-na.org

the utmost threat to biodiversity

– a review of recent studies in climate chaos –



Within fifty years, nearly 40% of terrestrial plants and animals are expected to be driven to extinction as their native ranges are eliminated from changing temperatures, with up to 1 million species.

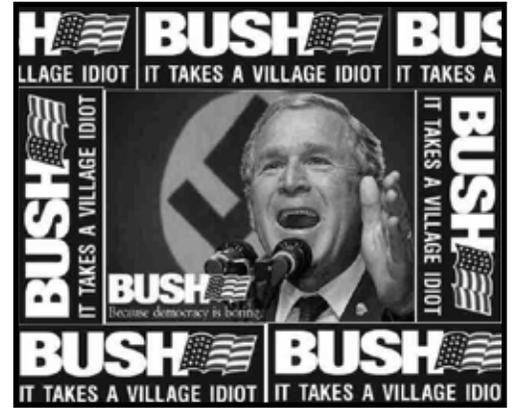
90% of the habitat for Boyd's Forest Dragon (*Hypsilurus boydii*) will be climatically unsuitable within the next few decades.

Polar Bear and other arctic inhabitants, as well as most amphibians, face almost certain extinction.

Nowadays, either the US Forest Service or logging companies evict us long before we can be effective, and insular groups of comrades struggle just to keep food runs going to the trees—forget outreach, campaigning and broader movement building. The small, more mainstream forest protection groups—most of them started by former direct actionistas—are doing more effective grassroots organizing, and their “legal monkeywrenching” is stopping more timber sales. But most are doing far less in the realm of non-hierarchical organizing and direct action for the Earth. Most importantly, these organizations have all but abandoned the cause of revolution in humankind’s relationship with the planet, prioritizing short-term “deliverables” over long-term revolutionary strategies.

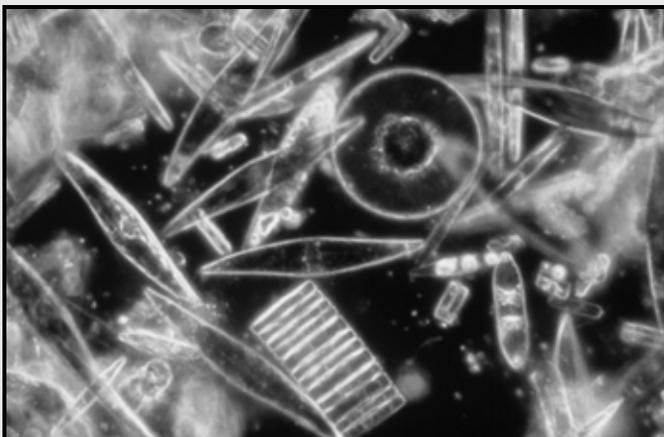
Interestingly enough, a similar tactical paralysis exists in the broader radical movements. For a brief period in the late '90s and early 2000s, a wave of anti-capitalist, anti-globalization protests swept the country, complete with mass arrests, clashes with police and lockdowns in the street. Green radicals, with their experience in these areas, played a significant role in the development of this trend. In some ways the radical energy that had been fomenting in the forest had spilled out in the streets. But these tactics had a rise and fall even more abrupt than those which occurred in the forest. Now the anti-globalization cause has been largely subsumed into an anti-war movement whose only articulated message seems to be “Bush sucks.”

Anti-war campaigners’ determined focus on Bush as the evil emperor ignores the role of the oil industry that we all know is pulling the marionette’s strings. How would the anti-war movement look if the masters of war were recognized as the refineries (responsible for human rights violations and ecosystem destruction across the globe), the production and promotion of car culture, and the energy industry? Likewise, mainstream environmentalists are also missing the boat. When it comes to climate change, all the talk is about Bush’s refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol, which merely promises a kinder and gentler global catastrophe. Where the hell is the “no compromise” movement? We need to transform the message from eliminating the evil emperor to a real conversation about eliminating the evil industries.



Marine Life: Continued

Ocean pH is slated to drop .5 over the century, to levels that have not existed in the oceans for many millions of years. This acidification, as well as the warming of the ocean’s waters, is expected to devastate plankton populations - the very basis of the ocean’s food chain.



Warmer, deeper waters are expected to wipe out the world’s coral reefs within a few decades. Coral bleaching occurs with even slight temperature increases and has already destroyed huge reef areas.

That radical environmentalists have failed to bring the environment squarely into the anti-war debate is a damn shame. But where radical environmentalists truly failed miserably is when Hurricane Katrina hit. People should have been blockading gas stations around the country as prices rose, with banners like: "They leveled New Orleans, they leveled Iraq—don't give them another dime." If we'd been organizing properly for several years around issues of climate change, we likely would have had allies from the full spectrum of radical movements at our side.

This is not to say that eco-radicals did nothing after Katrina. A startling number made their way down to the Gulf Coast after the storm, volunteering with a range of other progressives and radicals in the activist groups down there. This volunteerism allowed them assist in a situation where a disproportionate impact so clearly fell upon poor people and people of color. The disaster on the Gulf Coast should clearly be labeled environmental injustice. Many of the people of Louisiana and Mississippi still experience on a daily basis the effects of centuries of ongoing racism, slavery and forced relocations, with the government's response to Katrina just a recent and particularly catastrophic incarnation of environmental racism.

While assisting the survivors of environmental racism in Louisiana and Mississippi in rebuilding their lives, activists got a very small taste (from a safe distance, since none of us were from New Orleans, and if we had been, we likely would have had the resources to get out) of what ecological collapse will look like. Living and working there provided a sharp and clear view of the future environmental apocalypse.

Let's be clear: If the powerful continue on the current track of ecological destruction, their "collapse" will not be liberating, glorifying or adventuresome. If New Orleans is any indication, their collapse will first and foremost affect the same people who have always been exploited by civilization—those not part



Existence In Question



It is expected that marshes from Chesapeake Bay to the Everglades will be increasingly inundated with water over the next few decades, wiping out

these critical ecological areas where sea meets land, with catastrophic impacts on both the marine and avian life forms that call these areas home.



Higher stream temperatures will disrupt cold-water fishes species. Recent studies show a 50-

100 percent loss of brook and rainbow trout habitats over the coming decades. In the Pacific Northwest, Salmon populations are similarly imperilled by earlier snowmelts, already 10-40 days before historic dates, and a snowpack that has decreased by 11 percent.

of the dominant race or the dominant class. Those with loads of guns—right-wing militias, the military or its remnants—will rule the streets. For all of you spending time getting ready for this collapse, our eco-villages, bicycles and wild, primitivist lifestyles—which today's radicals claim to be fortifications for tomorrow's struggles—are likely to be seized by force or, even more likely, destroyed outright. You can imagine how the other 90 percent—including those not privileged enough to prepare for the collapse—will fare.

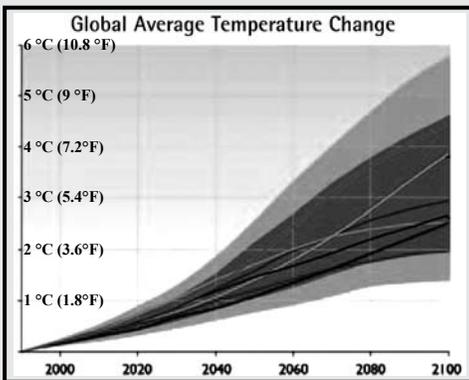
The end of industrial civilization imagined by many green radicals is a great goal. Technology—and the controls on land and capital it requires—is a terribly destructive force to the environment and to people. But as much as one might like to live in a post-industrial world, if one is to come about, then it must be on our terms and not the inadvertent result of disasters created by the powerful elite.

Climate change, unless stopped in its tracks, will propel us into their collapse: In the coming years, ecological crisis and social problems will become increasingly unified. It is completely imaginable that, within most of our lifetimes, we will exist in a world in which those organisms (human and non-human) without resources and political power will lose access to the basic necessities of life: drinkable water, non-smog blackened skies, areas less impacted by the ravages of climate change and wildlands to roam.

In the face of this expanded crisis, it may become extraordinarily difficult to value human life and non-human life as equals. We can expect those in control to pit the environment and social concerns against one another, in ways difficult to imagine today (at least for those who have never experienced environmental racism or classism). We should be prepared, as a livable environ-

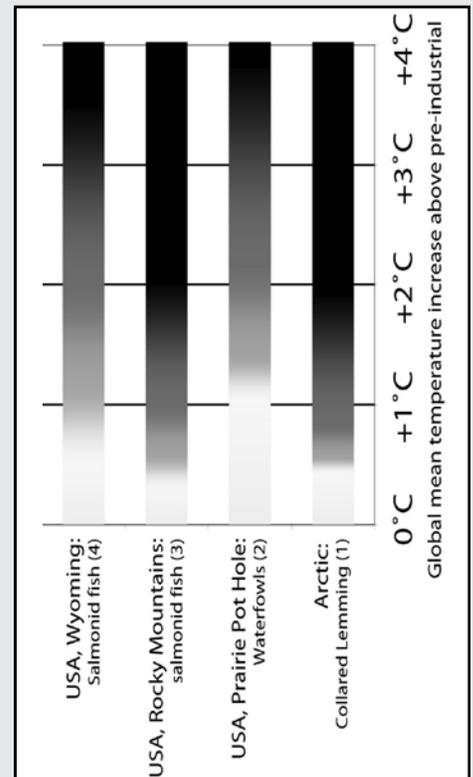
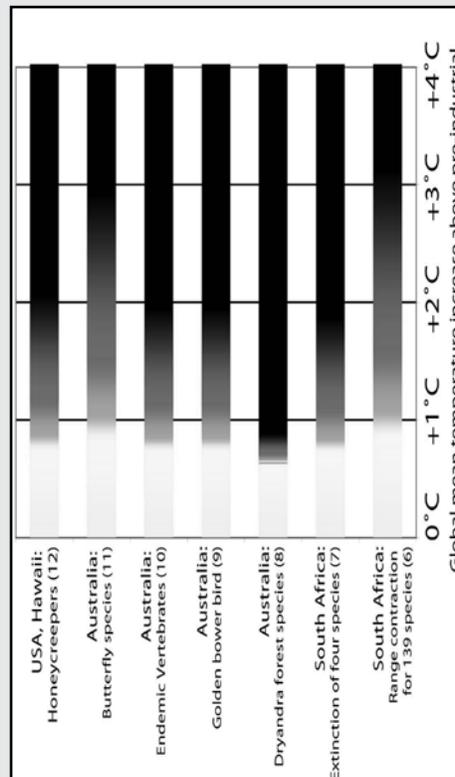
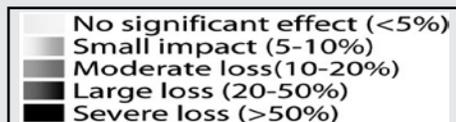


Few Ecosystems Are Likely



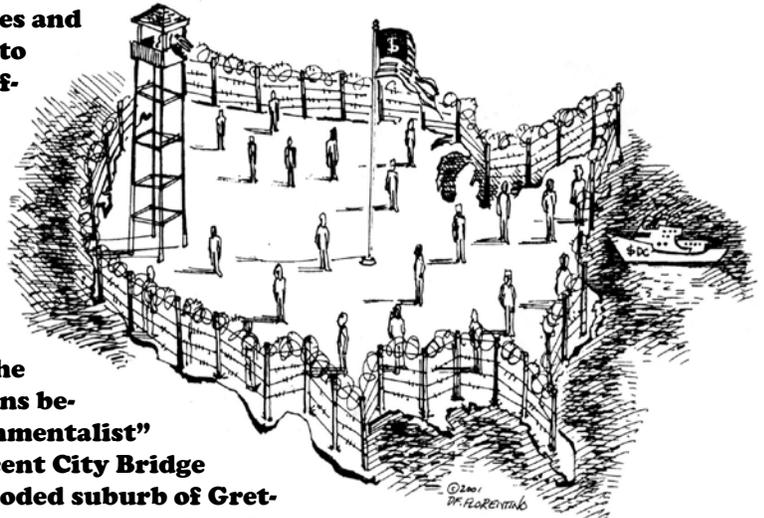
Above: Worst and best case scenarios of temperature change over the next 100 years.

Below and on the right: Overview of the impact of these temperature changes on ecosystems and species.



ment becomes a precious commodity, to see land values and living costs in less toxic or climate-ravaged areas rise to a level where even many middle class people cannot afford them. Many hold out hope that such events will finally unify people against ecological collapse.

It is just as possible however, that the exact opposite will occur. Many environmentalists may not realize or like to admit it, but most people with an anti-immigrant agenda, both in the US and abroad, consider the environmental "concerns" of immigration to be as important as the economic "concerns." Consider what will happen when large portions of the planet become unlivable, with millions or even billions becoming refugees and immigrants. The racist "environmentalist" politics of the future was foreshadowed on the Crescent City Bridge that connects New Orleans to the affluent and un-flooded suburb of Gretna. There, thousands of people fleeing a drowning city were turned back with gunshots by the unrestrained and well-armed remnants of the suburb's police force.

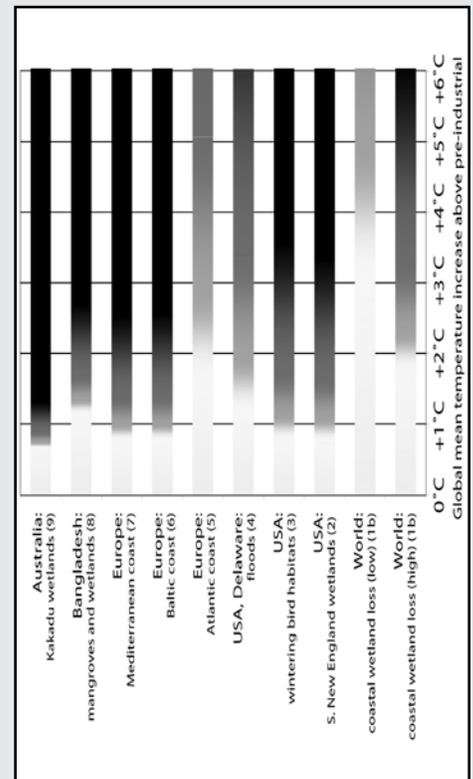
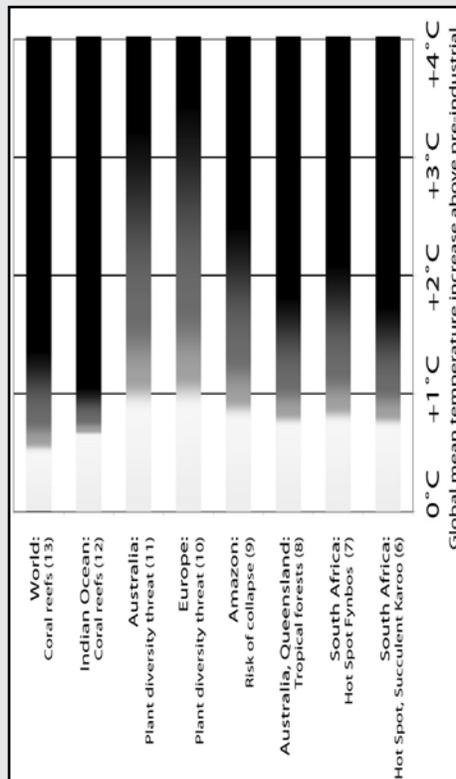
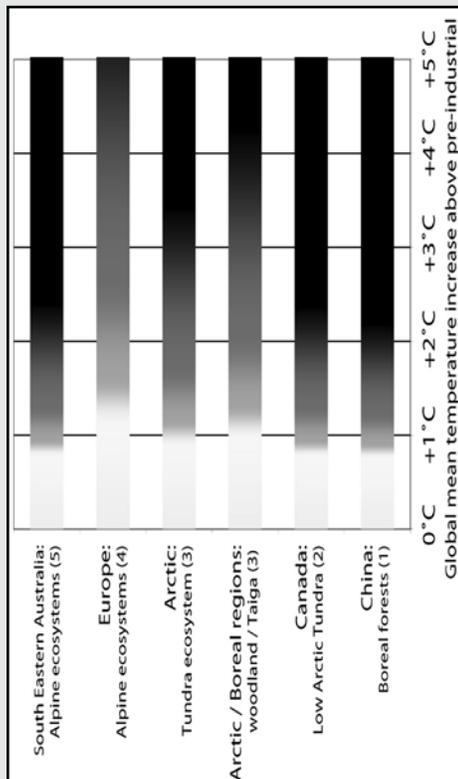


This is not an environmental present that anyone should have to endure, and it is not an environmental future that we can allow to pass. This path will be chosen or stopped within our lifetimes.

It's time for Earth activists to get serious about climate change, serious about climate justice, and serious about supporting and being allies to poor people and people of color, who stand to lose as much from our society's terrible relationship with the environment as the critters out there in the mountains and forests (and ultimately all of us).

Failing to build alliances between different activist struggles is simply not an option. We need each other's analysis to bring down the interconnected machines of classism, racism, patriarchy and Earth destruction. We need each other's support and strength of numbers. Most importantly, we cannot afford to be pitted against each other as those in power become increasingly able to exacerbate such conflicts between us.

To Survive Climate Change



Likewise, for a radical ecological analysis to reach beyond narrow circles, we must bring it to the forefront of larger interconnected struggles. Climate change allows one to talk about humanity's disconnect from the Earth, human rights violations from Appalachia to Nigeria, the consumer paradigm, and the exploitation of land and labor in a single conversation.

If radical environmentalists want to be more pro-actively anti-racist, we need to move toward ecological issues that are critical to those most concerned with economic and social injustice. Let's face it, 20 years of unrestrained misanthropy from the radical environmental movement, with no clear apologies issued, hasn't left the movement in the best position to build alliances with many people in labor and anti-racist struggles—even though they typically support ecological ideas.

Such a change is a good first step in fostering the conversations and building the experiences, bridges and trust that will be required for stronger and more lasting alliances. We have a long way to go, but fortunately some have already started organizing. Grassroots environmentalists and radicals doing organizing in the coalfields of Appalachia have a lot to teach us about building earth-centered, environmental justice alliances. The many environmentalists doing indigenous support also have lessons to share.

Green radicals in the UK, lacking wilderness to defend, pioneered resistance to car culture in the '90s. Years of pitched battles against roads and cars have evolved from elaborate protest camps to a more sophisticated assault on the oil economy itself. Groups using a radical, anti-corporate, earth-centered analysis to agitate around climate change have chapters throughout the UK, Australia and New Zealand. They are building connections with anti-fossil fuel struggles in the Global South and in working-class neighborhoods being overhauled for highways. Inspired by the ecological actions of the '80's and '90's they have a lot to teach us today.



WE'VE GOT A LOT OF WORK TO DO. THE COSTS OF FAILURE ARE IMMEASURABLE, BUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN ELEVATED LEVEL OF STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AGAINST CORPORATE RULE AND INDUSTRIAL MONOCULTURE ARE SITTING RIGHT IN FRONT OF US...

Rising Tide North America -- www.risingtide-na.org -- info@risingtide-na.org

