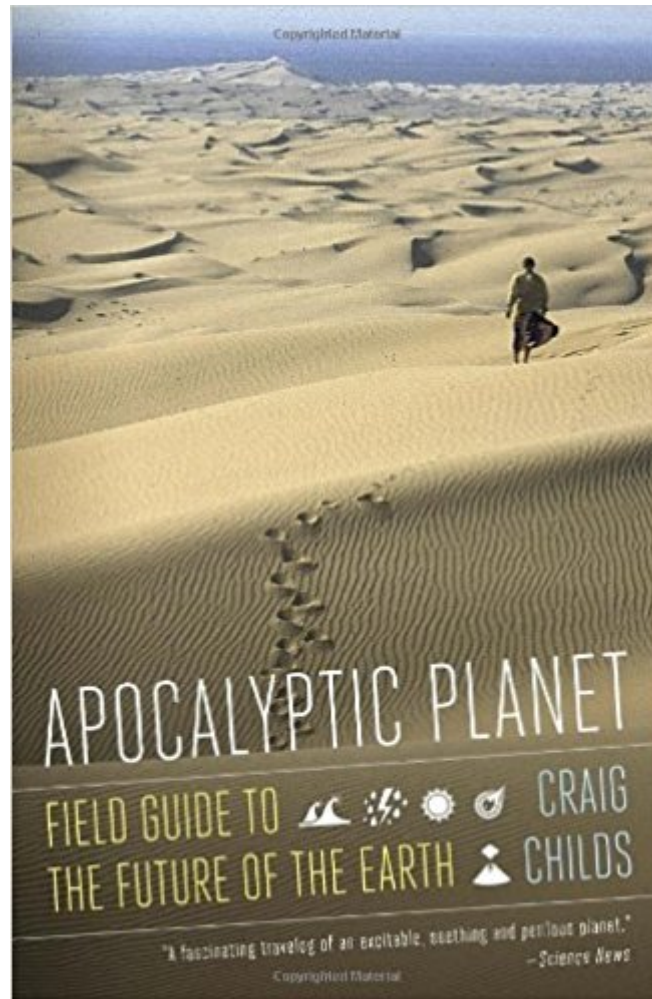


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Apocalyptic Planet: Field Guide To The Future Of The Earth



Synopsis

2013 Orion Book Award Winner 2013 Sigurd F. Olson Nature Writing Award Winner
Ours is not a stable planet. It is prone to sudden, violent natural disasters and extremes of climate. In this exhilarating exploration of our globe, Craig Childs goes to where the apocalypse can be seen now. From the driest deserts of Chile, through the genetic wasteland of central Iowa, to the site of the drowned land bridge of the Bering Sea, he uncovers cataclysms that tell us what could be next: forthcoming ice ages, super volcanoes, and the conclusion of planetary life cycles. Childs delivers a sensual feast in his descriptions of the natural world, and undeniable science that reveals both the earth's strengths and frailties. Bearing witness to the planet's sweeping and perilous changes, he shows how we can alter the future, and how the world will live on, though humans may not survive to see it.

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Customer Reviews

I've long been fan of big real(or at least realistic)-life adventure stories. As a kid I read Thor Heyerdahl's "Kon Tiki" at least seven times and devoured books by Farley Mowat, Jack London and Mark Twain. I read about sea voyages and shipwrecks, desert crossings and awkward portages, glacier ascents and trips into the bowels of the earth. It was the next best thing to being there, and as close as I could get from my home in rural Maine. Somewhere along the way, partly awakened by the Reagan administration, I became aware of how transitory these places and adventures were, how using the wild often means using it up, and that mankind has the power to kick the crap out of the planet without the self-control not to. I transitioned from adventure and exploration tales to

studying the apocalypse through "Alas, Babylon," "On the Beach," "No Truce with Kings," "Shadow on the Hearth" ...Craig Childs' new book, "Apocalyptic Planet," provides grist for both of my mental mills, reminding me that, yes, we're destroying our ecosystem in multiple ways, while showing me that the author had a hellishly awesome time finding out about them. The book is terrifying in some respects (who knew that corn was coming to get us, too?) and reassuring in others (our world may be ending, but there are others that won't -- and still more that won't get going until we're dead and fossilized.) The book is at its best when it has characters, when Childs can show the danger of his situations through the people around him: his mom, his step dad, the photographer who walked into a volcano and into the driest place on earth with him, the poor son of a bitch Childs conned into wandering with him into corn purgatory.

Craig Childs is a nature writer and globetrotting adventure hog. He's been thinking a lot about apocalypse lately. It's hard not to. The jungle drums are pounding out a growing stream of warnings -- "attention! -- big trouble ahead. The Christian currents in our culture encourage us to perceive time as being something like a drag strip. At one end is the starting line (creation), and at the other end is the finish line (judgment day). We're speeding closer and closer to the end, which some perceive to be the final Game Over for everything everywhere. Childs disagrees. "We are not on a one-way trip to a brown and sandblasted planet." He was lucky to survive into adulthood still possessing an unfettered imagination, and he can zoom right over packs of snarling dogmas that disembowel most folks who attempt to think outside the box. In his book *Apocalyptic Planet*, he gives readers a helpful primer on eco-catastrophe. The bottom line is that Earth is constantly changing, and it's not uncommon for change events to be sudden and catastrophic. He purports that the big storm on the horizon today is not "The Apocalypse." It's just one more turbulent era in a four billion year story. Out of the pile of planetary disasters, he selects nine examples, travels to locations that illustrate each one, and then spins stories. Each tale cuts back and forth between his adventures at the site, and background information from assorted sources. It's an apocalypse buffet. Deserts are a quarter of all land, and many are growing now. History tells us that they can expand and contract rapidly, taking out societies in the process. Four out of ten people live in regions prone to drying up. New Mexico once experienced a drought that lasted 1,000 years.

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