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Escaping Nature: How to Survive Global Climate Change

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BOOK REVIEW

Escaping Nature: How to Survive Global Climate Change. Orrin H. Pilkey, Charles O. Pilkey, Linda P. Pilkey-Jarvis, Norma J. Longo, Keith C. Pilkey, Fred B. Dodson, and Hannah L. Hayes. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024; 312 pp.; biblio., index. \$103.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781478020660; \$26.78 (paper), ISBN 9781478025443; \$15.93 (eBook), ASIN: BOCSWFYN8H

The book *Escaping Nature: How to Survive Global Climate Change* by Orrin H. Pilkey and his collaborators provides a comprehensive look at the impacts of global climate change on various natural phenomena and the adaptation strategies. As the title suggests, it focuses on what individuals, communities, and governments can adopt to endure, or at least survive, the deteriorating climate and the unpredictable extreme events caused by climate change. *Escaping Nature* is divided into five sections—Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Space—each examining different aspects of the planet’s natural phenomena and their connections to climate change. The chapters begin with definitions of the phenomena, discuss how they have been impacted by climate change, and end with a “What to Do” subsection highlighting a list of tasks and tips that readers can follow to better prepare for specific types of disaster.

Beyond traditional approaches to look at land (Earth), water (Water), and atmosphere (Air), the authors include Fire and Space as distinct sections to explore the impacts of climate change and adaptations, particularly in relation to wildfires, and the interconnection between human society and the environment. The first section, Earth, also provides foundational knowledge on how human activities have played a role to exacerbate biodiversity loss (so-called “the Six Extinction”) and introduce how scientists have known about the threats in global climate change (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report), making the book a useful resource for those new to climate change education.

The book effectively demonstrates how these hazards have intensified in recent decades, offering insight into both scientific and social aspects of the crisis. The authors’ extensive knowledge of natural disasters, combined with their real-life experiences on various disaster events, provide a practical and insightful perspective. This good mixture of science and example means the book could serve as a textbook for a natural disaster or climate change general-education courses in the U.S. colleges, as many of the natural disaster events discussed and exemplified are focused primarily on the United States.

As much as Pilkey and colleagues try to incorporate scientific processes into the book, there are times when certain explanations are not entirely clear. The complexity of the topic might be the reason for this, as some

ideas are difficult to convey in a few sentences. For example, Pilkey et al. (2024)'s description of how the melting of sea ice affects global sea levels by allowing mountain glaciers to slide more quickly into the sea left me puzzled. Processes like this involve intricate physical dynamics of the Earth's surface and are difficult to grasp in a brief explanation. Another notable issue in the book is the abrupt transitions between the scientific descriptions of natural phenomena or disasters and the practical bullet points of "what to do." Each chapter often moves quickly from discussing the science of a natural disaster or phenomena to offering practical suggestions for adaptation and survival. A short conclusion summarizing the event and its impact before transitioning into the bullet points of practical preparation would provide a smoother connection between the scientific explanations and the practical guidance.

The ending of the book also presents some challenges. Three short chapters—The Heart of the Matter, New Ideas, and New Developments—seem somewhat disconnected from the five major sections. The Heart of the Matter serves as a quick summary, but its bullet-point list of key ideas across the five sections feels somewhat unorganized and could be more effectively incorporated. The chapter New Ideas includes a collection of terminology and short descriptions of potential methods for climate mitigation and adaptation, which can be useful for some readers but seems out of place since the book's focus, as outlined in the introduction, is on climate adaptation, rather than mitigation. New Developments, which attempts to capture recent events that occurred before the book's publication, seems a bit like an afterthought.

Despite these drawbacks, *Escaping Nature* offers valuable insight into the challenges humanity faces due to global climate change, with a focus on how people can adapt and survive these disasters. The authors' expertise offers a valuable exploration of the recent observed climate-related extreme events, highlighting the interconnectedness of natural disasters and climate change. The book is a valuable resource for readers seeking to understand how extreme events in our environment are linked to global climate change, examining what has occurred in the recent decades and the various impacts. It also offers practical strategies for adaptation at the individual, community, and policy levels. It serves as a strong starting point for those new to the topic, offering valuable insights for navigating the climate crisis. Additionally, it functions as a useful reference for those looking for guidance on preparing for a safer, more sustainable future.—AN-MIN WU, *University of Southern California*