

Elizabeth Kolbert

Biography

Elizabeth Kolbert is a Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer and journalist. Her latest book *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in the General Nonfiction category, and was a New York Times 2014 Top Ten Best Book of the Year. Her series on global warming, "The Climate of Man," appeared in *The New Yorker* in the spring of 2005 and won the American Association for the Advancement of Science's magazine award. In 2006, she received the National Academy of Sciences Communication Award. She will be visiting the University of Northern Iowa on September 20 and 21, 2018.

Selected Readings

- [Kolbert, E. \(2009\). *The Sixth Extinction?*. *New Yorker*, 85\(15\), 52-63.](#)

The article discusses extinction on the planet Earth and environmental conditions in Costa Rica and Panama that has led to a decline in the golden frog population. Naturalist George Cuvier began studying species extinction in the early 19th century and his ideas were adopted by naturalist Charles Darwin in his theory of natural selection. The Big Five great extinctions that have taken place on Earth are discussed. The El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center (EVACC) in Costa Rica is discussed. **(9700 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2011\). *The Acid Sea*. *National Geographic*, 219\(4\), 100-121.](#)

The article presents an overview of the negative impact that carbon dioxide air pollution is having on the earth's oceans and their acid levels. A discussion of the impact that high acidic levels in the earth's oceans may have on the future populations of oysters and mussels, and on the earth's coral reefs, is presented. **(4300 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2011\). *Sleeping with the Enemy*. *New Yorker*, 87\(24\), 64-75.](#)

The article looks at how humans evolved from Neanderthals. Emphasis is placed on a 2011 study being conducted by the head of the evolutionary genetics department at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, Svante Pääblo. Topics include Pääblo's attempt to sequence the entire genome of the Neanderthal and how this led him to discover that modern humans mated with Neanderthals. **(8800 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2014\). *50 Years of Wilderness*. *National Geographic*, 226\(3\), 66-80.](#)

The article discusses the effectiveness of the U.S. Wilderness Act signed by U.S. President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, in light of its 50-year anniversary. Topics include the history of U.S. wilderness conservation, a map of protected and proposed U.S. wilderness areas, and the symbolic meaning and environmental impacts of designating wilderness areas. Included are photographs of several U.S. wilderness areas, including Gila National Forest, New Mexico, Sawtooth Wilderness, Idaho, and Patos Island, Washington. **(2000 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2015\). *After Shock: The Shaky Science Behind Predicting Earthquakes*. *Smithsonian*, 46\(3\), 36-43.](#)

The article discusses research on earthquakes and earthquake forecasting in Italy. Emphasis is given to topics such as the prosecution of seismologists such as Giulio Selvaggi following the 2009 L'Aquila

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earthquake, the reputation and public image of scientists, and the predictive value of swarms of small earthquakes. **(3900 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2016\). A Song of Ice. *New Yorker*, 92\(34\), 50-61.](#)

The article discusses the impact of global warming and climate change on the environmental conditions in Greenland. Emphasis is given to topics such as the retreating of the Arctic ice sheet and melting of glaciers, the East Greenland Ice-Core Project (EGRIP) managed by glaciologist Dorthe Dahl-Jensen, research on ice streams, and the history of human habitation on Greenland. **(8600 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2017\). The Content of No Content. *New Yorker*, 93\(25\), 42-45.](#)

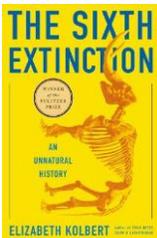
The article presents the author's views on the role of high technology in the society, highlighting the dominance of several companies on the Internet as of August 2017. Topics include the efforts of journalists to promote the candidacy of Democrat Samuel J. Tilden as president of the U.S. in 1876, the monopolistic nature of top technology firms Facebook Inc., Google Inc., and Amazon.com Inc., and the history of information technology. **(3400 words)**

- [Kolbert, E. \(2018\). Skin Deep. *National Geographic*, 233\(4\), 28-45.](#)

The article features prominent scientist Samuel Morton who was considered as the father of scientific racism illustrate his classification of people into five races. According to the genetic research that all humans are closely related to chimps wherein genetic changes in all human species are the result of random mutation which is considered as the code of life. **(1700 words)**

Readings and Resources

Books by Elizabeth Kolbert



[The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert](#)

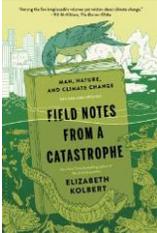
Call Number: QE721.2.E97 K65 2014

ISBN: 9780805092998

Publication Date: 2014-02-11

A major book about the future of the world, blending intellectual and natural history and field reporting into a powerful account of the mass extinction unfolding before our eyes Over the last half a billion years, there have been five mass extinctions, when the diversity of life on earth suddenly and dramatically contracted. Scientists around the world are currently monitoring the sixth extinction, predicted to be the most devastating extinction event since the asteroid impact that wiped out the dinosaurs. This time around, the cataclysm is us. In *The Sixth Extinction*, two-time winner of the National Magazine Award and *New Yorker* writer Elizabeth Kolbert draws on the work of scores of researchers in half a dozen disciplines, accompanying many of them into the field: geologists who study deep ocean cores, botanists who follow the tree line as it climbs up the Andes, marine biologists who dive off the Great Barrier Reef. She introduces us to a dozen species, some already gone, others facing extinction, including the Panamanian golden frog, staghorn coral, the great auk, and the Sumatran rhino. Through these stories,

Kolbert provides a moving account of the disappearances occurring all around us and traces the evolution of extinction as concept, from its first articulation by Georges Cuvier in revolutionary Paris up through the present day. The sixth extinction is likely to be mankind's most lasting legacy; as Kolbert observes, it compels us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human.



[Field Notes from a Catastrophe by Elizabeth Kolbert](#)

Call Number: QC981.8.G56 K655 2006

ISBN: 9781620409886

Publication Date: 2015-02-03

Elizabeth Kolbert's environmental classic *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* first developed out of a groundbreaking, National Magazine Award-winning three-part series in *The New Yorker*. She expanded it into a still-concise yet richly researched and damning book about climate change: a primer on the greatest challenge facing the world today. But in the years since, the story has continued to develop; the situation has become more dire, even as our understanding grows. Now, Kolbert returns to the defining book of her career. She'll add a chapter bringing things up-to-date on the existing text, plus she'll add three new chapters--on ocean acidification, the tar sands, and a Danish town that's gone carbon neutral--making it, again, a must-read for our moment.

Reviews of *The Sixth Extinction*:

- [Without a Trace. Review of 'The Sixth Extinction,' by Elizabeth Kolbert](#)

Gore, A. (February 10, 2014). Without a Trace

'The Sixth Extinction,' by Elizabeth Kolbert. *New York Times Sunday Book Review*"

"Over the past decade, Elizabeth Kolbert has established herself as one of our very best science writers. She has developed a distinctive and eloquent voice of conscience on issues arising from the extraordinary assault on the ecosphere, and those who have enjoyed her previous works like "Field Notes From a Catastrophe" will not be disappointed by her powerful new book, "The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History."

- [The 100 best nonfiction books: No 1 – The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert \(2014\)](#)

McCrum, R. (February 6, 2016). The 100 best nonfiction books: No 1 – The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert (2014). *The Guardian*.

"Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* is both a highly intelligent expression of this genre and also supremely well executed and entertaining. Her book, which follows her global warming report *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* (2006), is already set to become a contemporary classic, and an excellent place to start this new series of landmark nonfiction titles in the English language."

- [Oceans Sound the Alarm of the Sixth Extinction](#)

Sakashita, M. (May 7, 2015). *Oceans Sound the Alarm of the Sixth Extinction*. *Huffpost*.

"The Pulitzer Prize for Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* is a

watershed moment in the long struggle to wake people up to the dangers plundering the Earth and destroying biodiversity."

- [Cataclysm Has Arrived: Man's Inhumanity to Nature 'The Sixth Extinction,' on Endangered and Departed Species](#)

Kakutani, M. (February 2, 2014). Cataclysm Has Arrived: Man's Inhumanity to Nature 'The Sixth Extinction,' on Endangered and Departed Species. New York Times.

"The plight of doomed, extinct or nearly extinct animals is embodied in Elizabeth Kolbert's arresting new book, "The Sixth Extinction," by two touching creatures."

Interviews with Elizabeth Kolbert:

- [Elizabeth Kolbert Stares Down Mass Extinction](#)

Selby, S. (July 26, 2016). Elizabeth Kolbert Stares Down Mass Extinction. The Open Notebook. "In her Pulitzer Prize-winning 2014 book *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, Elizabeth Kolbert details the evidence that human activity is causing what scientists call the sixth mass extinction—the loss of as many as half of all living species on Earth. Kolbert traces the intellectual history of how scientists came to understand extinction and woke up to the impact we are having on the planet's ecosystems. That prospect is decidedly bad news—and bad news fascinates readers, says Kolbert. "If extinction is a morbid topic, mass extinction is, well, massively so," she writes in the book's prologue. She brings the morbid subject to life with fascinating descriptions of creatures and places across the globe—and with a good dose of humor. Rather than causing her to feel overcome by the horror of one possible future, writing the book left Kolbert wondering: Will we face up to what we are doing? And what's next?"

- [Off the Cuff: Elizabeth Kolbert, Journalist, Author, Activist](#)

Loadholt, K. (February 26, 2016). Off the Cuff: Elizabeth Kolbert, Journalist, Author, Activist. The Oberlin Review.

"Elizabeth Kolbert began working for The New York Times as a stringer in 1983 and has written for The New Yorker for 15 years. For her work on global warming and climate change, she traveled to Alaska and Greenland to better understand the debate over global warming. *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change*, which grew out of a three part series in The New Yorker, won the 2006 National Magazine Award in the Public Interest category. The Review sat down with Kolbert to discuss her career in journalism, the development of the industry, and the intersection of science and politics."

- [Will Humans Survive the Sixth Great Extinction?](#)

Drake, N. (June 23, 2015). Will Humans Survive the Sixth Great Extinction? National Geographic.