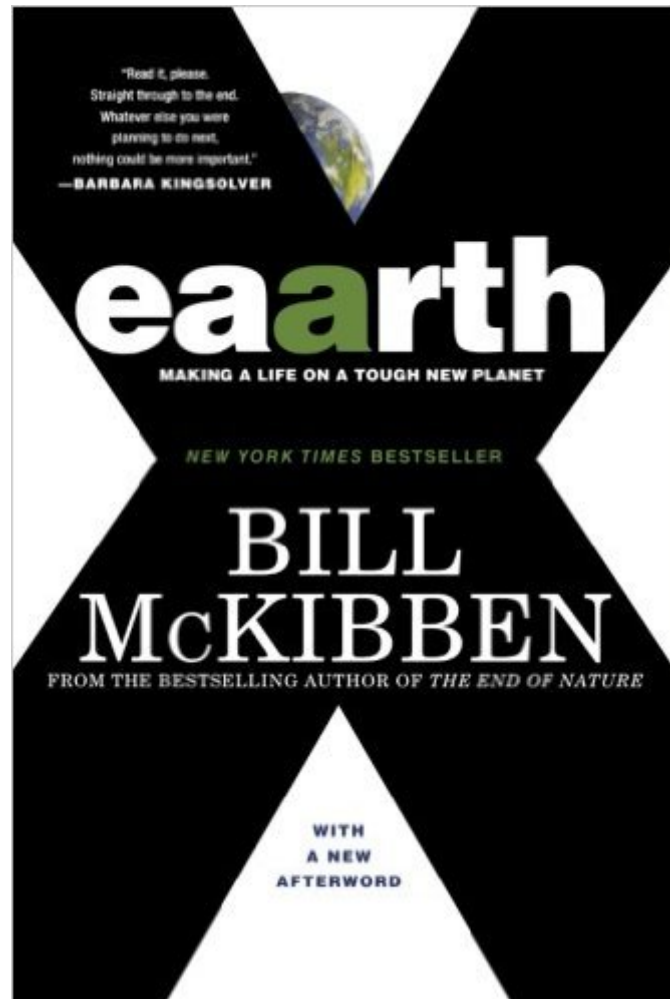


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Eaarth: Making A Life On A Tough New Planet



Synopsis

The bestselling author of *Deep Economy* shows that we're living on a fundamentally altered planet and opens our eyes to the kind of change we'll need in order to make our civilization endure. Twenty years ago, with *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben offered one of the earliest warnings about global warming. Those warnings went mostly unheeded; now, he insists, we need to acknowledge that we've waited too long, and that massive change is not only unavoidable but already under way. Our old familiar globe is suddenly melting, drying, acidifying, flooding, and burning in ways that no human has ever seen. We've created, in very short order, a new planet, still recognizable but fundamentally different. We may as well call it Eearth. That new planet is filled with new binds and traps. A changing world costs large sums to defend — think of the money that went to repair New Orleans, or the trillions of dollars it will take to transform our energy systems. But the endless economic growth that could underwrite such largesse depends on the stable planet we've managed to damage and degrade. We can't rely on old habits any longer. Our hope depends, McKibben argues, on scaling back — on building the kind of societies and economies that can hunker down, concentrate on essentials, and create the type of community (in the neighborhood, but also on the Internet) that will allow us to weather trouble on an unprecedented scale. Change — fundamental change — is our best hope on a planet suddenly and violently out of balance. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

The front cover of Bill McKibben's "Eaarth" contains a quote by Barbara Kingsolver urging the reader to drop everything and read the book straight through. What Kingsolver doesn't mention is that once you begin reading the book it'll be impossible to stop. McKibben describes a place so strikingly different from the planet Earth we have always known, that it has to be renamed to "Eaarth." McKibben's writing is easy to read and his ideas are clear, but his thesis is overwhelming to any reader: "The earth that we knew--the only earth that we ever knew--is gone." (pg 25) At times, reading the book is similar to the experience of watching a carwreck - it's heart-wrenching but you can't force yourself to look away. A lot of readers will probably dismiss Eaarth based on its "environmentalist agenda" - they'll say that McKibben is simply another tree-hugger attempting to instill fear about the world of the future, or to borrow McKibben's explanation as to why we haven't stopped climate change thus far - "the world of our grandchildren." But if this is true, then we definitely need more people like the author of Earth, as it doesn't seem that anyone is listening - currently, "44 percent Americans believe that global warming comes from 'long-term planetary trends' and not the pumps at the Exxon station." (pg 54) McKibben is probably one of the very few to steer us into the the direction of thinking that we can't restore the old Planet Earth. Thinking that driving hybrid cars and taking shorter showers will restore the ice caps in the Arctic is unrealistic. We need a major overhaul of our infrastructure and our logic to even adapt on this New Earth we created.

What would it be like to live on another planet? Like the proverbial frogs sitting in a pot of water slowly coming to a boil, we'll all eventually find out whether we want to or not. Bill McKibben maintains that we NOW live on a very different planet, a planet that's rapidly becoming less and less like the one humans have inhabited for many thousands of years. And it's too late to turn our space ship around and go back "home." No, we have to wake up and start learning how to live on the planet as it is--not the one we still would like to imagine that we live on. The first part of this book is bleak, and it needs to be. Too many of us are in complete denial about the condition of our planet and the mass extinctions now in process. So, who cares about how many species are going extinct? Anyone who understands that no man is an island. And that cold/wet weather we've had in 2010 that proves "there is no such thing as global warming"? That weather will only get more unpredictable and violent as time goes by--and, yes, it's due to global warming. James Hansen and so many other scientists were right, except for the fact that they underestimated how quickly climate change would occur. It's not a matter of what you believe: Nobody is going to be able to sleep through the earth changes--and isolationism, a cache of arms, and a lot of hateful rhetoric is not

going to feed anyone's family or keep them secure. Skills are the new gold, and we need to return to the days when neighbors helped neighbors. We need to press our technologies into service to help us survive, but we also need to return to a Depression-era sense of frugality and saving for rainy days. There will likely be many more "rainy days" in the future than there were in the past.

Although I'm in complete agreement with Bill McKibben that we are at the end of our old way of life, and find the future he imagines appealing, I believe that future is a fairy tale and that this book is of little value. The first half of the book amounts to this percent, that fraction, some year, some place, another measurement of volume, height, area, money, population. Meant to incite to action, I found it tedious but then, I've never been interested in this kind of homocentric environmentalism. The self-centered world view it demonstrates is the exact cause of the problems it worries about. What interested me in this part of the book were the brief mentions of ecological changes occurring---trees dying because of insects surviving warmer winters, mosquitoes spreading dengue fever farther and more rapidly, etc. McKibben's analysis of the Carter--Reagan election and its effects is good but although he writes of Reagan's optimism as being the problem, he commits the same error in this book. He writes off those predicting collapse, not because he thinks collapse is impossible (in fact he provides several reasons that it's likely), but because he sees them as being unwilling to accept other possibilities. To me, the problem is just the opposite---folks like McKibben aren't willing to face the facts. He prefers to imagine that we will voluntarily choose to make a gradual change to a different way of life. Not to say that some of us aren't already living a very different way of life or that the examples he gives aren't admirable, but to imagine that U.S. society as a whole is going to turn smoothly and peacefully away from consumerism and economic growth and urban life is simply ludicrous.

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