

A Hot Mess: How the Climate Crisis Is Changing Our World

Jeff Fleischer

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Jeff Fleischer's *A Hot Mess* is a substantial, science-based guide that explains climate change through history, its deniers, and the current evidence, all in a candid, accessible format that invites young people to take action.

With a journalist's knack for finding the human angle behind compelling issues, Fleischer begins with the Tuvalu Islanders, whose livelihoods are threatened by rising sea levels, and whose story is a signpost of the climate crisis. This dynamic introduction illuminates how the "worst-case forecasts" have already arrived, setting the stage for a skillful blend of honed facts and historical overviews, from industrialization to modern politics and its too-frequent deference to energy companies. The result is an incisive portrait of how people arrived at a pivotal moment.

The chapters cover basic terminology, such as the difference between weather and climate; the effects of droughts, wildfire devastation, rising sea levels, and glacier melts; and the fallout on the animal world, including coral bleaching. References to extreme weather events in the recent past build a convincing message about climate change's pervasiveness, while crisp sidebars enrich the subject. It's the powerful section on the humanitarian crisis and climate refugees, though, that's most urgent, as it's here that the impact of wealthier nations' choices comes to roost.

Without downplaying consequences of people's actions, the book's tone is cautionary, yet not defeating. It addresses the mistaken belief that it's too late with the apt, practical message that even if that's true about certain problems, "that's no reason not to try stopping" elsewhere, since "we have to live with the outcome either way." Suggestions for concrete actions to reduce carbon footprints and useful resources conclude the book.

A Hot Mess is an unvarnished introduction to climate change that's refreshing about sharing the supporting science.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2021)

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