

★ Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore**Elizabeth Rush**

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Obsessed with the rate of sea-level rise, environmental writer Elizabeth Rush traveled extensively along the US coasts and as far afield as Bangladesh, interviewing concerned scientists and coastal dwellers directly affected by devastating floods and catastrophic storms.

Her conclusion: the future we feared is already here. In the time it has taken to write this book, the sea level's predicted end-of-century rise has doubled. "If sea level rise continues to accelerate at even half this speed we are looking at a rise of well over ten feet in the next eighty years," she writes.

Scientists have found that Earth's climate doesn't change slowly and steadily. Instead, the transition from ice age to greenhouse conditions and back again is often rapid and dramatic. It has happened before, but this is the first time that humans will be here to see it. And it won't be pretty.

The prediction is that by 2050 there will be two hundred million refugees worldwide due to climate change that has been exacerbated by human intervention in the landscape. Of these, two million will be from the state of Louisiana, whose southern edge is eroding at a rate that's among the fastest on the planet.

Rush explains the role of thriving wetlands and tidal marshes in securing coastal land and in providing habitat for threatened or endangered species, and how short-sighted laws have allowed filling and hardscaping them for economic gain. In response, coastal animals and insects are relocating, and even plants are moving inland, slowly stretching their rhizomes away from the sea.

What Rush lays before us in her book is extremely disturbing: that our only hope appears to be retreat—evacuation of the coasts and relocation of the things we value—and that we must take radical, even unthinkable, action at once.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May/June 2018)

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