

From Kauai to Sicily,
a fond farewell to earth's good old days
—and a wakeup call.

Welcome to the Suicide

by Kate Hulbert

Years of trying to figure out why we destroy the natural environment to support perpetual economic growth led me to this conclusion:

Large animals, such as elephants, such as gorillas and humans, are goners. There's nothing we'll be willing to do to prevent our own demise.

The human animal is so fatally flawed that we'll deny our responsibility unto our death. So, this won't be a chirpy little essay about how we can all pull together to save Gaia.

We are knowingly and systematically destroying our only known habitat. There are many examples of this behavior: We fished out the cod in the Grand Banks, we exterminated the American buffalo, and many traditional rain-forest cultures are no longer viable because they have sold their trees for lumber. We all recognize these examples and shake our heads. Once in awhile, we cite a recovery as evidence of our environmental awareness and expertise: the Bald Eagle!

But this time, it is not a culture or a species that we can isolate and dismiss. We can't say, "They did it." We can't blame the shortsighted, self-serving arrogant bullies whom we've elected to lead us, either.

I'm writing this from Kauai. I flew here, and my flight dumped a load of carbon right into the beautiful ocean I came here to adore. The oceans can't keep absorbing carbon. They are acidifying. They are warming. The carbon-eating algae are dying.

Not an hour after we arrived in Hawaii, we were toodling around in our rented mini van, big enough to carry luggage, snorkel gear, art supplies, us and all our baggage.

James Lovelock, that productive scientist who figured out that CFCs are eroding the ozone layer, says we have already pushed the planet over the brink (and he *under* estimated the dangers of CFCs). He thinks that only 1/30th of the world's population will survive, *if* we head for the Arctic.

Of course, this assumes that we can organize, and avoid killing each other off in the name of religion or politics.

Later this spring we're headed for another island, Sicily, where their ancient ritual killing of giant tuna, the Mattanza, has dwindled to a tourist sideshow because of overfishing. Now the Japanese processing ships hang out just offshore to buy and process whatever fish are still there to be caught and get them to high-end restaurants a.s.a.p. Here in Kauai, we have stuffed ourselves several times with fresh ahi tuna. It was delicious.

Methane gas (more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2) now leaks from the Siberian permafrost. The latest data say this is happening at five times the recently predicted rate.

James Hanson of NASA, one of the planet's

top climatologists, is more hopeful than Lovelock. He says we have nine years to change course before we cross the threshold and create a different planet.

Shall we tell the Chinese they can't have all those cars? How fast do you think we can get those coal companies to quit it and go solar?

Why am I writing this at all if there is no hope? What's the point? Is this mea culpa of any value at all beyond self-flagellation, a public humiliation for my sins? Between snorkels on the beach, I'm rereading the Dalai Lama's book, *Ethics for the New Millennium*. One of the points I find most compelling in his Buddhist philosophy is his simple observation of human similarities. We all want to be happy and do not want to suffer.

The degradation of the earth's balance is now causing only the poor to suffer. As it escalates, it will cause all of us to be unhappy and all of us to suffer. The only way *out* of this is to see that we are all *in* this.

Could there possibly be a phase change of human behavior? Could we all suddenly develop empathy? When we move on up to Greenland, will those few of us left be kind to each other? Will we wean ourselves from childish magical thinking that creates gods in our own image to blame and beseech? Will we mature into beings who understand that we're only part of a system in fragile balance? Will this unparalleled catastrophe teach us that our irresponsible greed led us to our own suicide?

Large animals, such as elephants, such as gorillas and humans, are goners.

Climate Report

by Del Coffee

Paris France: International scientists released their findings on global warming February 2nd. The study by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, is the fourth assessment by the group that was formed by the United Nations. This most recent report is the result of 6 years of study and based on 12 years of previous studies. The IPCC, made up of hundreds of scientists and researchers from more than 100 nations, concluded that global warming over the past 50 years is "very likely" due to the increase in emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. The term "very likely" indicates a confidence level of more than 90%. Although an immediate reduction in carbon dioxide, methane and other green house gases could vastly reduce the catastrophic effects of global warming, past and future gases will continue to contribute to the earth's warming and the rise in sea levels for more than 1000 years to come.

Since the Industrial Revolution, when the burning of fossil fuels greatly increased, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere has increased 35% to a level not seen in 650,000 years, according to the European Project for Ice Coring in Antarctica.

A summery of the report concludes that, "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global sea levels."

Linda Mearns, senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said "There seems to be a real shift toward a focus on climate change. The evidence is mounting, and has an effect on people's perceptions." Mearns believes that increased interest in global warming is also being fueled by the vacuum of "clear leadership at the top" in the United States.

On February 3rd, the day after the new report was released, 45 nations answered French President Jacques Chirac's call for a new environmental body to slow global warming and protect the planet. It is suggested that the new body might have policing powers and the ability to punish violators. Conspicuously missing from this group of concerned nations was the world's largest polluter, the United States. Also absent were India and China, two emerging economies that are following in the footsteps of the US. The US currently contributes 25% of global emissions. US Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said of the report, "we're very pleased with it, we're embracing it, we agree with it." Still the Bush administration only calls for voluntary cuts in emissions by industry. Past chairman of the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee Senator James Inhofe, R-Okla-homa, who has long claimed that global warming was a hoax, said the UN report was written and edited by governmental officials and is "a political document, not a scientific report".

The Guardian newspaper in London ran a story that the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank which takes money from Exxon Mobil, is offering to buy articles by

scientists, economists and others skeptical of the new report. The group has said it's only looking for *independent* reviews of the report.

Last year Exxon Mobil posted record "earnings" of \$34.4 billion.

Shambani Organics

Prepare your garden!

Lettuces, greens & peas
organic bedding plants

--- Ready March 1 ---

Ask for them at area nurseries

Shambani Organics

(530) 474-1646

LWKessler@shasta.com

Herbal Medicine Discussion Group

February 25, March 18, April 15, 6:30 pm Redding

Feb. 25: Discussing Ayurveda

and Medicinal Garden Plants

Call: (530) 524-5537

e mail: earthwalkerherbs@hotmail.com