

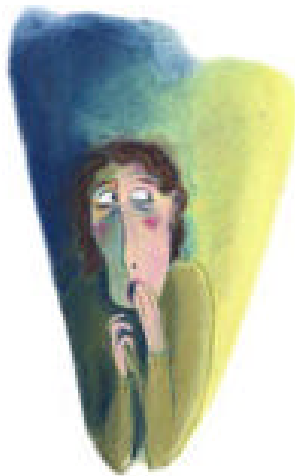
ScareWatch

“Wilder and wetter everywhere”

by

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“Wilder and wetter everywhere”

The scare: *The Guardian*, one of the two UK newspapers most prone to write unverified and scientifically-inaccurate stories about the consequences of “global warming”, published an article on **10 December 2008**, intended to influence delegates at the UN’s Poznan conference on the climate. The article listed a series of alleged climate catastrophes all round the world, saying that “millions ... are feeling the force of a changing climate. ... Evidence is emerging of weather patterns in turmoil and the poorest nations disproportionately bearing the brunt of warming”: more and longer droughts, more floods, more heat waves, more rainfall, more frequent and intense cyclones leading to food and water shortages, more illnesses and water-borne diseases, more malnutrition, soil erosion, disruption to water supplies.

In North-Eastern Brazil, temperatures are said to have risen by 1 degree C in 30 years. In “low-lying” Bangladesh, *The Guardian* says there has been a 10% increase in the intensity and frequency of major cyclones (the period over which this increase is supposed to have occurred is not stated), with too much rain in the rainy season and too little in the dry season. The “balmy” Caribbean is “also being churned up with increasing frequency and ferocity”, with eight hurricanes in 2008, five of which were major, and the hurricane season lasted “a record five months”, leading to “coral bleaching and flooding”.

In Mozambique, there is “a clear increase in temperature”, with more frequent extreme-weather events, such as tropical cyclones, and late rains. In Nepal, floods that once happened once a decade “seem to be annual and getting more serious”. Forest pigs farrow earlier; rice and cucumber “will no longer grow where they used to”; days are hotter, trees flower twice a year, and “raindrops are getting bigger”.

Lakes in Nepal and Bhutan fed by “glacial meltwater” are “growing so rapidly that they could burst their banks”. In Tadjikistan, “thousands of small glaciers will have disappeared completely by 2050, causing more water to flow and hence a “disastrous decline in river flow”. The area of Peru’s glaciers fallen by “22% ... in the last 35 years”.

The truth: The first of two central falsehoods implicit in *The Guardian*’s wearisomely characteristic catalogue of real or imagined climate disasters is the attribution of every local change in the weather to manmade “global warming”.

We begin, as we have had to begin so often in the past when examining such articles as this, by reminding readers that there has been no statistically-significant “global warming” for 13 full years since 1995, and that there has been a significant global *cooling* over seven full years since late 2001 – a cooling that *The Guardian* has chosen not to highlight to its readers. It is

at once apparent, therefore, that every single one of the imagined recent catastrophes described by *The Guardian's* breathless reporters cannot possibly have been caused by any kind of warming, whether manmade or natural, for the good and sufficient reason that there has not been any warming.

The second central falsehood lies in the fact, repeatedly stated even by the generally-excitabile United Nations climate panel, that individual extreme-weather events, particularly on a local scale, cannot – repeat, cannot – be attributed to “global warming”. Why? Because, as the UN’s 2001 climate assessment puts it, the climate of the Earth is “a complex, non-linear, chaotic object” whose long-run evolution, in the words of Lorenz’s famous paper *Deterministic Non-Periodic Flow* (1963), “cannot be predicted by any method”. It follows that, if even a global phase-transition (a sudden change to what had previously seemed to be a regular pattern) cannot be attributed to a particular cause, then *a fortiori* a local phase-transition cannot be attributed to that cause.

Given the universal application of these two falsehoods to *The Guardian's* alleged catastrophes, it is not strictly necessary to examine each of *The Guardian's* specific allegations about the supposed impact of manmade “global warming” on individual regions. The entire article is founded upon sand. However, *The Guardian's* latest list of disasters is more than customarily baseless, and betokens some desperation at the failure of “global warming” to do the damage that the newspaper has so often said it would do. We shall look briefly at a few of the supposed climate cataclysms.

“Drought” in north-eastern Brazil: The history of South America, going back to the time of the Inca and Mayan civilizations, has been one of alternate drought and flood. Set in this historical context, which *The Guardian* is very careful not to mention, a few years of drought in a single Brazilian region are unremarkable. Most of the southern hemisphere has been cooling even more rapidly than the northern hemisphere in recent years.

The Accumulated Cyclone Energy Index, a running two-year sum of the estimated intensity of all recorded tropical cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons worldwide, was first compiled 30 years ago: in October 2008, its lowest-ever value was recorded, demonstrating conclusively that, in fact rather than in theory, the combined frequency and incidence – in short, the impact – of tropical cyclones worldwide is at an all-time low.

More and worse “tropical cyclones” in “low-lying” Bangladesh: There is no credible scientific evidence that “global warming”, even if it were occurring (which it is not), would cause any increase in either the frequency or the intensity of tropical cyclones. Dr. Kerry Emanuel, the lead author of a much-cited paper in 2005 suggesting a causative link, has since substantially retracted his finding. The Accumulated Cyclone Energy Index, a running two-year sum of the estimated intensity of all recorded tropical cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons worldwide, was first compiled 30 years ago: in October 2008, its lowest-ever value was recorded, demonstrating conclusively that, in fact rather than in theory, the combined frequency and incidence – in short, the impact – of tropical cyclones worldwide is at an all-time **low**. This result confirms other findings: for instance, the absence of any trend in the number of landfalling Atlantic cyclones for a century; the 30-year decline in the frequency of intense tropical cyclones; the similar decline in the frequency of intense typhoons; and the population-weighted decline in the incidence of death and in the cost of insured damage

arising from tropical cyclones. Outside the tropics, it is settled science that a warmer world would lead to a reduction in both the frequency and the intensity of storms. And “low-lying Bangladesh”, despite repeated warnings from *The Guardian* and other newspapers about rising sea levels, has seen a **growth** of some 70,000 square kilometers in its total land area, caused by various factors that have nothing to do with “global warming”.

“Increasing frequency and ferocity” of hurricanes in the Caribbean: As paper after paper has demonstrated, and as Robinson, Robinson & Soon (2007) have confirmed, there has been no trend whatsoever in the number of hurricanes making landfall in the West Atlantic for a century. *The Guardian*’s statement is simply false. The hurricane season, said by *The Guardian* to be “a record five months”, is by no means of unprecedented length. It is true that flooding occurs during any sufficiently intense tropical cyclone, including major hurricanes: but, compared with the great Galveston flood of 1900, and with many other flood disasters in the first 60 years of the 20th century, recent flooding arising from hurricanes has been much reduced and far less harmful either to life or to property. Lloyds of London have been making record profits in the past couple of years.



Great Galveston Hurricane of 1900

“Coral bleaching” last occurred on a significant scale ten years ago, in 1998, as a result of the exceptional (but not unprecedented) natural alteration in global ocean currents known as the El Nino Southern Oscillation. There had been two previous such strong El Nino events, each lasting only a few months, over the past 300 years. As a result of both these events, bleaching of corals occurred: however, we know that corals evolved at least 175 million years ago, in the Triassic era (though *The Guardian* is very careful to avoid giving its readers this perspective), and, therefore, they have survived the major global-extinction events of the Triassic and Cretaceous periods, as well as having survived both global temperatures up to 7 degrees C (12.5 F) higher than the present, and atmospheric and oceanic carbon dioxide concentrations up to 10 times today’s. Bleaching does not in fact harm corals: they continue to grow quite successfully after bleaching events.

“Increased extreme-weather events” in Mozambique: The weather records in most African countries – and particularly in those, such as Mozambique, which were wracked by civil wars for decades – are simply not complete enough to allow any such conclusion to be drawn. Even if there had been more frequent and more intense extreme weather in Mozambique, it would not be proper to assume, as *The Guardian* strongly implies, that the problem is Africa-wide. In central Africa, for instance, in the region around Mount Kilimanjaro, there has been pronounced *cooling* for 30 years. It is this cooling, and the consequent atmospheric dessication, that has led to the ablation of most of the summit glacier. The glacier is not melting, because in 30 years the summit temperature has never

risen above -1.6 degrees C, and its average temperature has been -7 °C. It is inappropriate to select only those regions of a generally-cooling planet that (if the local records are reliable enough) have shown some recent warming, and to argue from these particular instances to an implicit general conclusion that “global warming” is occurring, or is causing damage.

“Disappearing glaciers” in Nepal: It is in the nature of glaciers that sometimes they advance and sometimes they recede. Professor M.I. Bhat, of the Indian Geological Survey, says that the 200 years of records concerning the 9575 glaciers that debouch from the Himalayas into India, initially maintained by the surveyors of the British Raj, disclose no recent pattern that is cause for concern. Although *The Guardian’s* article seems to assume that it is glacial meltwater that provides the nations of the region with their water supply, it is in fact Northern-Hemisphere snowmelt that provides almost all of the water supply. There has been no trend in northern-hemisphere snow-cover extent in the 30 years of continuous satellite monitoring. New records for northern-hemisphere snow-cover extent were set in 2001/2 and in 2007/8, and the latter record may well be surpassed in 2008/9.

The purpose of The Guardian in inventing this galloping concatenation of ingenious but baseless fictions was to induce nations such as the United States to part with large sums of taxpayers’ money to subsidize the imagined consequences of their past over-use of wicked fossil fuels for the poorer countries of the world.

The purpose of *The Guardian* in inventing this galloping concatenation of ingenious but baseless fictions was to induce nations such as the United States to part with large sums of taxpayers’ money to subsidize the imagined consequences of their past over-use of wicked fossil fuels for the poorer countries of the world. Whatever may be the intrinsic merits of aid to the Third World, the recent evolution of the climate, which is well within the parameters of normal variability, provides no basis for any additional funding. **End of scare.**

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http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Floating_wreckage,_Galveston_hurricane,_1900.jpg

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