

# DISCOVERIES

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BIOCATASTROPHE

Pennywheel (394 pp.)

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A textbook on “biocatastrophe” as a global public-safety issue.

Biocatastrophe is a term the authors coined for “the simultaneous degradation of the Earth’s principal ecosystems, including those inhabited by humans, as a result of the radical alteration of the Earth’s climate and natural landscapes.” This hefty text aims to explore the causes of biocatastrophe and the significance of its effects on the human and natural world. The authors put this crisis into the context of other ecological crises, like global warming, urbanization, deforestation, mass extinction and loss of ecosystem biodiversity—all of which, they write, are elements of an overarching biocatastrophe. In neatly organized chapters, the authors—who were inspired to write the book after their experiences as volunteer firemen in the 1960s and ’70s—detail the history of human ecology and how biocatastrophe fits into health, politics and economics. The text proves it is up-to-date with contextual information on the global financial crisis and evidence that two seemingly unrelated activities (the environment and the global economy) are indeed linked. Though the authors don’t explicitly describe our future, they strongly hint that Earth’s citizens will have to redefine their values and prepare to live with finite resources. To emphasize the sheer magnitude of biocatastrophe, nothing that can be defined as a military, industrial or commercial activity is spared the author’s dissection. The sentences are packed with information, and an editor would do well to streamline the writing into more digestible servings. The resources in the back of the book are ample—glossary, charts and several appendices provide sources and helpful data.

A heap of difficult-to-read information on a relevant topic.

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