

A rough yet provocative guide to climate change

“WHETHER YOU’RE ALARMED, skeptical or simply curious about climate change, this book will help you sort through the many facets of this sprawling issue,” states the introduction to *The rough guide to climate change* by Robert Henson. A meteorologist and journalist by training, Henson has been reporting on climate change for nearly 20 years as a freelancer and for the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. First published in 2006, *The rough guide to climate change* is in its second (2008) edition.

Written for a general audience, the book is organized into five parts. First, “The Basics” explains greenhouse gases and how climate change works. Second, “The Symptoms” shows how climate change is already affecting life on Earth and how these changes may play out in the future. This section may help resource managers elucidate what changes may occur on park lands and waters and put currently identified changes into context. Of interest to managers may be Henson’s succinct explanation of why certain species are vulnerable to climate change—the so-called canaries of climate change (e.g., amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and certain species of mice). Also managers in the Gulf Coast Network may find the chapter about hurricanes and other storms particularly pertinent. Third, “The Science” describes the global warm-up: what’s measured, who is measuring, how they’re measuring, and what various time scales show. Fourth, “Debates and Solutions” provides a history of the global-warming debate and its media coverage, as well as a discussion of solutions that include political agreements, cleaner energy sources, household and travel tips for reducing one’s carbon footprint, and geo-engineering schemes (i.e., global-scale attempts to reshape Earth’s atmosphere). This section also addresses common arguments and counterarguments, which resource managers may find useful in preparing funding proposals. Perhaps tongue in cheek, Henson sums up the extremes of these arguments as follows:

The atmosphere isn’t warming; and if it is, then it’s due to natural variation; and even if it’s not due to natural variation, then the amount of warming is insignificant; and if it becomes significant, then the benefits outweigh the problems; and even if they don’t, technology will come to the rescue; and even if it doesn’t, we shouldn’t wreck the economy to fix the problem when many parts of the science are uncertain.

Henson responds to each of these points scientifically. Resource managers may find his responses useful when preparing public presentations or addressing skeptics of climate change in an audience. Finally, Part 5 lists books and Web sites that have global warming as a focus.

The rough guide to climate change is well researched and presents logical discussions that guide readers through the complexities of climate change. Though lighthearted in its title and approach, this little book is provocative, making readers think about climate change in new ways. Perhaps the result of climate change will not be a disastrous end, but simply a more mundane planet as coral reefs glow with less brilliance, and common, robust species (e.g., deer) proliferate. It is provocative because it makes readers think, “Is this what I want? Is this an acceptable outcome?”

Reference

Henson, R. 2008. *The rough guide to climate change*. Second edition. Rough Guides, Ltd., New York, New York, USA.

— Katie KellerLynn