Heatstroke
Nature in an Age of Global Warming
By Anthony D. Barnosky

In 2006, one of the hottest years on record, a “pizzly” was discovered near the top of the world. Half polar bear, half grizzly, this never-before-documented animal might be dismissed as a fluke of nature. Anthony Barnosky instead sees it as a harbinger of things to come.

In Heatstroke, the renowned paleoecologist shows how global warming is fundamentally changing the natural world and its creatures. While melting ice may have helped produce the pizzly, climate change is more likely to wipe out species than to create them. Plants and animals that have followed the same rhythms for millennia are suddenly being confronted with a world they’re unprepared for—and the shock could kill them.

This is not the first time climate change has dramatically transformed Earth. Barnosky draws connections between the coming centuries and the end of the last ice age, when mass extinctions swept the planet. But now, change is coming faster and hotter, and humanity is driving it—which means this time we can work to stop it.

No one knows exactly what nature will come to look like in this new age of global warming. But Heatstroke gives us a haunting portrait of what we stand to lose and the vitality of what can be saved.

Anthony D. Barnosky has been on the faculty at the University of California–Berkeley since 1990, where he currently holds the posts of professor of Integrative Biology, curator of Fossil Mammals in the Museum of Paleontology, and research paleoecologist in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

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