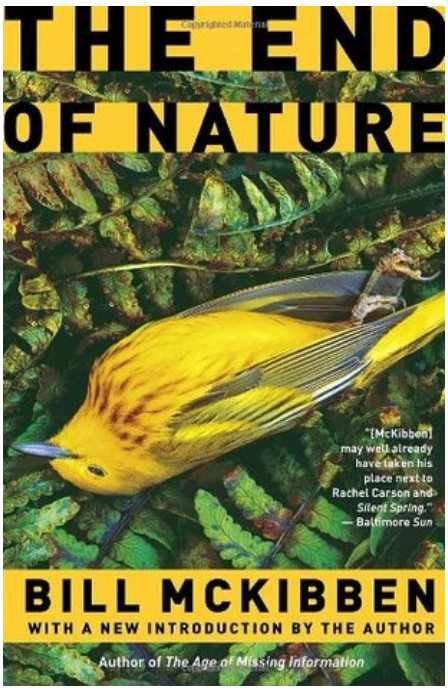

The End of Nature

Bill McKibben

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Reissued on the tenth anniversary of its publication, this classic work on our environmental crisis features a new introduction by the author, reviewing both the progress and ground lost in the fight to save the earth.

This impassioned plea for radical and life-renewing change is today still considered a groundbreaking work in environmental studies. McKibben's argument that the survival of the globe is dependent on a fundamental, philosophical shift in the way we relate to nature is more relevant than ever. McKibben writes of our earth's environmental cataclysm, addressing such core issues as the greenhouse effect, acid rain, and the depletion of the ozone layer. His new introduction addresses some of the latest environmental issues that have risen during the 1990s. The book also includes an invaluable new appendix of facts and figures that surveys the progress of the environmental movement.

More than simply a handbook for survival or a doomsday catalog of scientific prediction, this classic, soulful lament on Nature is required reading for nature enthusiasts, activists, and concerned citizens alike.

The End of Nature Details

Date	:	Published May 1st 2006 by Random House Trade (first published 1989)
ISBN	:	9780812976083
Author	:	Bill McKibben
Format	:	Paperback 195 pages
Genre	:	Nonfiction, Environment, Science, Nature, Biology, Ecology, Sustainability

From Reader Review The End of Nature for online ebook

Lisa Vegan says

This book presents the sobering idea that there is no longer such as thing as nature, because humans have caused such massive changes by their presence and behaviors; that humans have altered everything (including all forms of plant and animal life) on earth. I read the book when it was first published in hardback form, and it made immediate sense to me, unfortunately. I'll never be able to look at "nature" in exactly the same way as I did, although I can still enjoy what there is of it, and feel even more motivated to protect what remains.

Sean Chick says

A poetic and meandering meditation on the future of a world transformed by humanity, written before the really bad stuff happened. His thoughts on genetic engineering have not come to pass (yet) but the world he feared, one of runaway environmental destruction and climate change, has occurred. This book will likely be studied by the monks of the new dark age just peeking over the horizon. That said, knocked off a star for his romantic musings on raw nature that he sprinkles in the text. I get it but I think it broke up the flow of the chapters.

Nina says

Perhaps as an environmental studies student who has studied the 30 years of theory that followed and partly responded to The End of Nature, I was unable to see the book without bias. That said, I have never been so frustrated with a book before. Bill McKibben is an excellent writer, and a very good person, but his treatment of the notion of nature is misleading and lacking in depth.

His major thesis is that in the past (a generalized, Western past), we saw nature as being clearly autonomous from humanity-- as something more powerful than we are. With the effect of CFCs on the ozone layer, and greenhouse gases on the atmosphere, and the promise of advanced biotechnology, nature is no longer beyond our power-- our decisions shape what nature will do to us. McKibben seems to be arguing that we are losing a sort of religious mystery in this transformation. Somewhat paradoxically, he also argues that nature will become more unpredictable and frightening as our influence on the biosphere increases.

What is missing is a discussion of humanity and of why we think of nature the way we do. Through many passages of nature writing-- of his own and from others, McKibben presents nature as an ordered, benevolent force of beauty. But he also stresses her danger, mystery and awfulness. This romantic view of nature that McKibben mostly engages with is a relatively recent one. He does not take adequate pains to separate this from prior western views of nature, or non-western views of nature. Part of the reason the recent environmental destruction seems to have a destructive effect on the romantic idea of nature is that the romantic idea of nature was largely a concept that was born in response to the growth of technology and the uglinesses of industrialization. The triumph of technology signals the destruction of the romantic ideal because the romantics threw down that gauntlet and lost.

Even without global warming and CFCs, the view of a nature that has eluded the influence of humanity forever is being challenged by ecologists and archaeologists. The inseparability of man and his habitat is a recent subject of interest for many environmental thinkers and scientists, perhaps partly in response to McKibben's assertion of their former independence. The midwestern prairie ecosystems co-evolved with Native American fire. Many of the plants and animals we are familiar with co-evolved with humans, even when they were not deliberately bred (see Jared Diamond and Michael Pollan). No one in history has ever seen a nature unadulterated by human influence.

McKibben fails also to discuss human nature and the relation between human nature and nature beyond the human body. In many ways our ideas about nature are symbols or contexts for our own self-understanding. The romantic notion of a pure, beautiful and good nature is often related to a notion of the human soul as being "naturally" pure and beautiful. As civilization corrupts out environment, so civilization corrupts the soul. It would be interesting to consider the implications for interpretations of the psyche that a new view of nature has-- either one that breaks down the boundaries between human and non-human or a more technologically driven one that values the human will over everything. What should we make of the fact that our minds are themselves a product of evolutionary processes similar to those that we can now consciously influence through biotechnology or accidentally influence through global warming?

Carol Storm says

Makes a lot of important points, but I could do without the holier-than-thou attitude and the constant undercurrent of hysteria. Oh, and this guy name drops the wild animals he runs into in the woods the way Donald Trump name drops the lingerie models he slept with in the Eighties.

Guy Barnhart says

Be prepared for an incredibly depressing read. This book was originally published in 1989, which was when I was a toddler. While many of the predictions in this book have come true, we're still finding out how much of an impact climate change will have on our planet, from increasing ocean acidity, to mega droughts and powerful hurricanes which are already exacerbating other issues. Obviously, this book will feel dated in some sections if you've been keeping up with the growing body of knowledge surrounding climate change, but it is helpful seeing how these issues were understood nearly 3 decades ago.

The depressing parts? Well, the fact that in the last 30 years since this book was published, we've barely changed our behavior or our consumption of petroleum-based products, despite growing awareness of how severe the effects of climate change will be on the economy and the environment. Even though McKibben was already preaching the "end of nature", wider society has seemed to not care. Animal species continue to go extinct, plastics pollute everything and ice continues to melt at both poles.

Why read books like this? I haven't really uncovered an answer yet. These types of book are always incredibly depressing, especially as an American who looks around and sees how utterly beholden I am to the mega industries destroying our planet. I guess it helps keep me aware of the future that is rapidly approaching, this knowledge helps me reevaluate my behavior as a consumer, to do with less. It informs the

kinds of politicians I vote for. And maybe when the conversation comes up with climate change skeptics, I can present some type of non-controversial evidence to let them know, it's about to get a lot worse on this blue planet we call home.

David Schaafsma says

I read parts of this book in 1989 when it came out, excerpted in various liberal and environmental journals and in the NY Times. McKibben, one of the leading environmental writers of our time, wrote here a groundbreaking and powerful and angry book which I have now re-read in its entirety. Well, as you can guess from the title, it is not a hopeful little book about what you can do to contribute to saving the planet; it is, rather, a story documenting everything that happened because, having been warned of the coming environmental crisis already in the seventies, we did almost nothing over twenty years to respond to what scientists continue to scream about.

Who is this "we" that I McKibben refers to? By "we" he means the West, and primarily the United States, who have taken the lead, of all the "developed" countries, in most resembling an ostrich on climate change. Things may in the last year seem to be slowly beginning to change, many countries are moving boldly to act, but in 1989 McKibben was already saying it was too late to retain any hope for continuing to embrace an idea resembling what we had thought was "nature" in, say, the early twentieth century. The dead bird on the cover says it all. Earth as we know it is dead, or soon will be, McKibben makes clear.

This is a newer edition of the book, produced 17 years later in 20o6, with a new preface to say things had--ten years ago now--only gotten worse, of course. I only read it to prepare to read one of his more recent books, Eaarth, which I have been told includes some hopeful pronouncements about the greater and louder global movement to save the planet, helped a little by the Obama administration. We'll see. I'm not optimistic about seeing a lot of McKibben optimism.

We know that the majority of Republicans in this country--The US--believe that climate change is a hoax. Almost no other country in the world has millions of people who think that everything is basically just fine, and science be damned. And how does this come about? Politicians--including most democratic politicians, are bought by the coal industry, and by Big Oil, just as they have been bought by Big Pharm and once were bought by Bit Tobacco, and so on. I recall one of Reagan's first acts as President was dismantling Carter's solar panels: Solar panels, Reagan "reasoned," sends a bad message to the Oil Industry, on which we are so dependent, and still are.

Mid "review" rant alert: As I drove up to backpack over Labor Day weekend with my family on the south shore of Lake Superior, on the 43 miles of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, I heard Rush Limbaugh on the radio pontificate about the Hoax of Climate Change for an hour. It's just sunspots, a mile aberration, Rush says. Green house gases and the Ozone layer are just bull hockey the liberals have made up. Man did and does nothing bad, ever, to the planet, unless of course it's those commies, the Chinese, unless of course we need to borrow money from them; the point is that we need to stay the course and we continue to do as we have always done, using the planet's resources with wild abandon and no fear for the future. Progress, Bigger is Better, as always.

Because I listened to Rush, I also spent a couple hours doing something I never do, listening to Faux News, the US's most watched source of television "news" which has, bought by Big Oil, never acknowledged there is any environmental crisis whatsoever. Both Fox News and Rush LOVE to hate Bill McKibben, no surprise.

They excoriated him for this book and everything he has written since.

Trump has said he does not believe in climate change and he now appears the growing favorite to win the presidential election. When he wins, he says he will pull back on any (of the already tepid) commitments Obama made to finally work against climate change, and most of Trump's supporters agree with that move, natch. Libtards and their anti-American, anti-progress conspiracies, haha. But even if Hillary wins, she is no environmental leader.

We are so screwed.

But I will read one more McKibben book in search of any hope to report here. If I can make a list of ten hopeful things I find there, I promise to share them.

McKibben did write this other book in 1995, which I haven't read, in response to the outcry that he hadn't been chipper enough, so if you wanna read only hopeful environmental books, here ya go: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1...

As for me, I choose the narrow path of depressing realism. :)

Camille says

This book holds a lot of truth and McKibben's argument is convincing and strong, and thus it may be the most depressing book I've ever read.

Ian Robertson says

Bill McKibben has become a force in the environmental movement through his writing and his leadership at the climate change advocacy and activism organization ‘350.org’. His first book, The End of Nature, is an important call to action to combat climate change, and a natural successor to Rachel Carson’s seminal book, Silent Spring, which focused more narrowly on the impact of pesticides on the environment. McKibben’s book is, given the additional twenty years of environmental impact studies and the emerging understanding of human caused climate change, appropriately broader in scope than is Carson’s. It is also, given its broad scope based upon emerging science, a less focused and more aspirational call to action than Carson’s pesticide-based alarm bell.

For example, when the book was first published there still existed scientific debate about whether the climate was warming or cooling, and though McKibben gives space to both points of view, distilling the key points from reputable scientific bodies (NASA, NOAA, various universities) he leans towards the warming trend. We know now that climate change is a more apt description than global warming, because the latter implies

to most that it will be a gradual increase with similar impact everywhere - consistent with McKibben's linear examples - and not the unpredictable and variable impact we are currently experiencing. (For example, due to oceanic and atmospheric patterns, sea level increases have been shown to be localized and much larger around Florida and the Carolinas than in many other areas).

Despite his caution that the subject is complex, and that the outcomes are wildly uncertain, McKibben nonetheless resorts often to simple cause and effect examples, such as "The ocean rises; I build a wall; the marsh dies, and, with it, the fish." In fact, McKibben does this so often that The End of Nature at times almost verges on speculative fiction, something better left to Margaret Atwood (see for example, The Handmaid's Tale).

Written 30 years ago, the book is also a bit dated in its examples, and in its repeated references to nuclear weapons - a threat which hasn't diminished (perhaps even increased with the rise of certain rogue states), but which has generally shifted from an awestruck horror to a grudging acceptance within society. Still, though they are dated, the nuclear references are natural and appropriate comparators to our potential destruction of nature. And on another front McKibben is ahead of the curve warning that our prolific genetic engineering is a looming, additional End of Nature.

There are many biblical references in book, which is a bit surprising for a secular subject and a pluralistic audience, though perhaps that's just a sign of the book's age. The effect is a subtle yearning for a lost era – not just for when our environmental footprint didn't loom so large, but also for when a Western European ethos ruled in America.

The quibbles noted above are minor, though, and can be forgiven as the message McKibben delivers has only become more important over the past 30 years. The End of Nature is an important call to action from an important environmental figure. It should be read today by all with an interest in the environmental movement and the signature works that have helped advance the cause.

Michael says

Written in the late 80's, this is a disturbing book to read as we approach the second decade of the 21st century. Disturbing because so little of our dialogue about climate change has progressed beyond what was being discussed two decades ago. Doubly so because McKibbin's nightmare, that we might delay action for 20 or more years, is precisely the course we have chosen, and the consequences are sure to be all-the-more dire because of it.

Much of this book is dated now... The science, for certain (An Inconvenient Truth is a far better source for more recent research). But on the whole, the book and McKibbin's perspective remains relevant as we, every day, make the choice between action & inaction regarding our impact on what remains of the natural world. This book is a reminder of what we are losing and, sadly, what we have already lost.

Two decades later, it's still worth the read.

Jonathan says

This book was a let-down. I know that Mckiben is an important thinker and leader when it comes to getting folks to acknowledge climate change and in moving folks to attempt to take action to address the causes of climate change. I am not sure what I would have thought about it had I read it twenty years ago, but reading it today, while I found the descriptions of the problems of climate change and certainly the idea of an "end of nature" compelling, I found McKibbin's construction of the ways we might respond to climate change obnoxious and tiresome.

(Actually, I think I do know what I would have thought twenty years ago… I would have loved it. As a fifteen year old I was completely taken with the mainstream environmental movement. I was very susceptible to any well-written position about the environment: liberal, corporate green washed, or "militant," and I would have been excited to read McKibbin's analysis and his explanation of the futurist response to climate change I know I would have been completely taken by his description of deep ecology. When I entered college a few years later and met young people involved in EarthFirst!, I would have engaged in some kind of hero worship, would have felt like I had finally found "my people" and probably plunged head first into the kind of vision of environmental activism that they held out. Instead having never read McKibbin's flowing endorsement of a deep ecology approach to activism I found them on the one hand dangerously exciting but on the other wondered how they reconciled a position of "earth first" with issues of social justice.)

I actually found McKibbin's proclamation of the "end of nature" interesting. While his sense of personal loss that nature no longer existed, didn't quite resonate with me, the idea raises all kinds of existential and, I guess, 'spiritual' questions. In all honesty, even though McKibbin's thinking has been available to me the past twenty years, the idea that "nature" as we have traditionally thought about it no longer exists was new to me. His argument is a good and shocking one.

It was when McKibbon turned to how we might respond to climate change that the book became tiresome to me. Admittedly McKibbon gives an interesting treatment to the, bio-engineered man over nature, futurist response. Twenty years ago the grotesque description of this response that McKibbon lays out would have been really helpful to me, because I at the time I was pretty ready to uncritically accept any number of claims by industry or science that we could invent/innovate our way out of ecological crisis. Having this Frankenstein version of our future laid before me would have helped me be more critical of green washing and technocratic solutions to ecological and environmental justice issues.

McKibbon's championing of deep ecology was really where I felt let down. Yes, he did write about some of the social and economic injustices related to climate change. Particularly he did a good job explaining why uneven patterns of "development" make western capitalist "core" communities' talk about the need to get by with less, have a smaller ecological impact, etc so hypocritical. But he ignored the reality that there have been and continue to be voices from those "less developed" poorer more peripheral more recently colonized communities that have something to say about the relationship between people and our environment, about the causes of environmental, about what humane and ecological ways of organizing our societies in response to climate change and the end of nature might look like. One might feel it is unfair to fault McKibbon for ignoring these voices in 1989 – the environmental justice movement would not even be labeled and given wide recognition until 1991. But the voices of the communities organizing against environmental racism in the US, the voices of communities directly impacted by every step of the C02 cycle,* the voices of radical third world ecologists, the voices of indigenous peoples all of the world were out there. McKibbon was just another in a long line of folks like Muir, Hoffeman, and Foreman as well as the big mainstream environmental groups and the militants of EarthFirst who didn't take the time to listen to, learn from and then amplify those voices. I don't give the big environmental groups a pass on ignoring the environmental justice movement back in the late 80's and early 90's, and I just can't give McKibbon a pass either. It is ironic because in a way McKibbon is trying to 'unpack' our understanding of nature as this independent force and our assumptions about how humans relate to nature, and it is in part these mainstream understandings and assumptions about nature that minimized or devalued the voices of folks other than western white males in determining how societies might respond to ecological crisis. Looking more deeply at

how we've constructed "nature," as McKibbon leads us to do, forces us to think about how our understanding of the environment and our impact on it is as much about social and economic organization as it is anything inherent in humans or our environment.
I just wish McKibbon had acknowledged that there is another choice between human's engineering every aspect of the earth so that it meets our needs and wilderness = earth and earth uber alis position of deep ecology: and that is that while humans are not inherently more valuable than other life, we as humans we do have a responsibility to other humans and thus trying to our vision of social and economic relationships between has to be part of our understanding ecology. It just does not make sense to organize around an vision for social and economic change that does not prioritize the voices, understandings, and hopes of peoples that have been most directly impacted by environmental destruction, social injustice, economic exploitation, colonization, and domination.

Andrei Taylor says

The end of nature is a enviromental awareness novel about the end of nature as we understand it. We have ended nature through our need for growth.

Bill shows that it is not nature itself that is ending but rather the nature that has been blossoming for years. Through genetic engineering we may be able to save our world, but this created world will lack the beauty of the old world. We will have trees and plants but these genetically modified versions of our trees and plants will not do justice to the beauty of a natural forest.

He says (in 1989) that the end of nature is already inevitable so there is really no point to try to stop it and it is a shame that our grand children may never know what it looks like to see a sky without sodium sulphate, or what it looks like for a forest to have a diversity of trees.

Our world was and is beautiful, but we will never be able to return to an age where the temperature, animals or any other aspect of nature cant be manipulated for our benefit.

We hope to learn enough to save ourselves but we must begin to limit ourselves, though it will be difficult to do.

I cannot say I agree with all the points he has made, but this book is also (at the time of this writing) 24 years old. We are experiencing some of the problems, but others were greatly exaggerated. Overall it is a good book, but it is extremely outdated.

Jeremy says

The thesis is clear and probably true: Human beings are now causing so many changes in the world that we cannot think of "nature" as an independent force that acts on us. In other words, "nature" is now (partially) man-made. Parts of the book were moving, but there's better stuff around.

Beth says

I gave this book a quick re-read after initially reading it for academic purposes years ago and being put off by the doomsday approach of McKibben. Even though I agree with McKibben in general, I don't like this book. It offers nothing but commentary. It leaves the human species out of the equation. Instead of motivating one to action, it takes the winds out of the sails.

AJ says

This book was okay... McKibben's main thesis is that humans have done such a grand job dominating nature that it is no longer natural. Thanks to climate change, our weather is no longer due to nature, it's due to human activity, which is why the book is titled The End of Nature.

I think that Michael Pollan offers an interesting counter-argument to this idea in Second Nature A Gardener's Education, where he asks, what is nature when man has been playing around with it for so long? Is man truly disconnected from nature?

I read the 1990 edition, which was interesting. I'd like to compare it to the recent editions which I'm sure he must have edited (if only to remove the Soviet Union references).

The chapter about biotechnology and genetic engineering was something else. I didn't realize it was satire at first (I hope it was satire!), which made it kind of shocking coming from an environmentalist. He did seem to hold some hope in the genetic engineering of plants to help us get through hot, dry weather, but now that we have enough evidence to the contrary maybe he'll realize that was sort of a pipe dream.

Overall the book doesn't really offer any concrete ideas for change, it doesn't shake the status quo too much, and McKibben even admits that he would find it hard to change his lifestyle, because it is comfortable and he's used to it. I kind of just feel ambivalent about this book, just as I felt ambivalent about his recent "upload a photo of yourself with 3 numbers to stop global warming" movement.

I guess I just feel like, if this is all our environmentalists can come up with, this planet is screwed.

(Also, side note, this was a library book and a previous reader circled the name Thoreau every single damn time it was written in the book. WTF?)

Jack says

This long essay asks two questions: What would our lives be like if nature were not bigger than us? And what would it be like to imagine ourselves smaller?

The first question -- which takes up the first half of the book -- is fascinating. McKibben argues that a core part of what Nature does for us is let us know that the world has rhythms, predicability. That there is beauty

out there that transcends us. It gives us a sense that there is something more than us out there. He has a very nice section where he acknowledges that this is what religion does, or, for many of us, once did. Nature can help take some of burden off our shoulders, by reminding us as individuals that, even if we screw everything up, the sun will still set gorgeously. But, he asks provocatively, what would we lose if that were no longer true? And he makes a powerful case -- one that has come to feel more like common sense in the two decades since he wrote -- that our large scale changes to the environment, particularly via the green house gases, are creating a world that is more volatile. Moreover, it is more volatile because of what we did. Beyond all the palpable damage those changes will cause, knowing that we did it will take away from us the solace of nature.

This may be overstating the point a little -- the Grand Canyon's going to be impressive for a long time, as are the brilliant red of the cardinals that live in the hedge outside my door -- but the point is there. I came across McKibben's book when it was repeatedly references by Richard Louv's Last Child in the Woods. Louv makes a more modest case, but one so persuasive that, over a few years, it changed my approach to fathering, and had a large role in where we currently live. Louv argues that children need, at a very deep level, to be a part of nature. Not "Nature" like on t.v. or in an aquarium -- that is, Nature as some abstract bit of environmental knowledge, possibly at risk, certainly over there somewhere. Instead, they need to have nature -- things growing, unpredictably -- somewhere close, where they can palpably interact with it. This lead to a lot more hikes in my family, and lot of wandering off paths and poking at things. Nature as a body-contact sport. I feel like my kids, and I, are better off for it, even if we got some scratches and scars to show for it. And this interpretation of McKibben that Louv offers is particularly compelling, in saying that we need to not imagine ourselves separate from nature.

And that is the sense in which McKibben challenges us to be smaller, to live more simply. To imagine living as if we had NOT been given dominion over the land. My profession makes that hard. It's an enormous challenge to figure out how to enact a more humble way of living. Biking around town helps, sure, but it hardly seems like enough. McKibben seems less compelling here -- he gestures towards Deep Ecology, but doesn't seem himself to really know how to fully do it. He reads the science too carefully, I think, to really believe half measures are enough. But, is a half-measure, a bit less carbon release, enough? I'm not sure myself, and struggle with it. McKibben sharpened that struggle, but it sits unresolved. I end up feeling like the Oncler, "Perhaps...."

Michael says

Read this one several years ago, but it's been much on my mind lately so I thought I'd put up my review. In 1988, a 19 year old me was living quite happily in a cloud of pot smoke in Orono, Maine. My roommate, a great guy we called Woody (because that's what he was) was waving a copy of this book around and explaining to me an idea he'd just learned about in one of his tree-hugger classes (he was a Forestry major) called 'the green house effect.' Apparently, Woody told me, mankind was releasing all of this CO2 into the atmosphere, which served to trap heat and would raise global temperatures enough to cause unpleasantness upon our planet. Twenty-six years ago, Woody told me I should read this book.

Woody now lives off the grid in Vermont with his wife and three kids. They use solar panels, they homeschool, and they pretty much live the *Little House on the Prairie* lifestyle that I so admire. About three years ago, I went to Vermont for the weekend and brought a copy of this book, which served as both an introduction to the work of Bill McKibben and a hat tip to my woodsy friend from long ago. I was reminded of this book, and of McKibben's rumination on the idea of nature (vs. actual nature) as I've been reading

another book by Wendell Berry.

In any event, all of this was gelling together in my head this morning: Maine, greenhouse gases, nature, Woody, Bill McKibben, and Wendell Berry. So there you have it. It is a great book. I wish I had read it when I first saw it. I wish I had paid more attention to environmentalism when I had the time to get myself arrested at a protest, or live in a burrow with my hippy friends. Sadly, I am now firmly ensconced in the machine. Ah, youth. It truly is wasted on the young.

Maureen says

Bill McKibben is more than a science writer: he is a poet. His descriptions of forests ravaged by acid rain are more deeply moving now than when this book was written ten years ago. He issued a clarion call that was taken up by many people, but still we are struggling with the issues presented in this book. If you have not read any of McKibben's other works, this is the place to start.

Anna says

The great problem with this book was the way it approaches nature--namely that he wants to leave humans out of it. He seems more angry that we exist as a part of the world than interested in thinking of productive ways of dealing with the the concerns regarding the environment that we are facing.

Jessica says

Firstly, I have to remark that I am an admirer of McKibben and his environmentalist work, particularly his participation as of late in stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. And the End of Nature does have some useful information and thought-provoking moments. I stand by and relate to McKibben's discussion of the inevitable hypocrisy of any modern-day environmentalist, the urgency of global warming, the disturbing possibilities that bio-engineering makes possible, the unfortunate dilemma of whether or not to bring a child into the world we live in, etc. However, I find the main premise of this book, "the end of nature," to be feeble and often contradicted within the very text of the book, particularly in his discussion of deep ecology.

McKibbon's declaration of the end of nature relies on three assumptions that I find to be incorrect. Firstly, it is based on the assumption that man is separate from nature. McKibben suggests that anyone who claims otherwise does not really believe it. I wholeheartedly disagree. The environmental mess that we find ourselves in today has been caused by this attitude; a denial that we are in fact just like any other animal, a part of nature. McKibben, in my opinion, places too much power in the hands of humanity. Humanity may think it can tame nature, but it can't, no matter how much scientific, techno-junk and theory we produce. McKibben's insistence on this point seems to stem largely from his Christian background which peppers the text and to which I hold no loyalty.

Secondly, (a point that it is tied to the first) McKibbon is working with a definition of wilderness that equates it to only that which has been untouched by the human hand. This definition of wilderness is illusory and not based in reality. One must look to nature everywhere, as Cronon discusses in Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature. McKibben too easily casts aside the importance of the changes that

humanity has been bringing upon the earth for thousands of years. To him, the only environmental change that has truly mattered is global warming, a change which he directly relates to white, western culture. He makes no reference to the changes that Native Americans and other similar populations around the world have been making to the environment for generations(such as Native Americans creating the Great Plains through the use of fire). However, to admit that these changes are significant would debunk McKibben's argument, because they would demonstrate that separating man from nature is impossible because man is a part of nature.

Lastly, McKibben seems to be working with a conception of nature as a static entity, something that has remained unchanged for as long as humanity can remember. Nature has ended, according to McKibben, because this static nature no longer exists. This, I would argue, is failed logic because nature is, has and always will be dynamic. McKibbon claims that "old nature" was "utterly dependable" and that "new nature" is unpredictable. This claim is ridiculous, nature has always been unpredictable. Nature is continuously evolving. McKibben's most important piece of evidence for his argument is the unpredictability and violence of weather under the influence of global warming. I, personally find this piece of evidence to be the strongest argument against McKibbon's "end of nature." Surely the violence of today's weather is a sign that nature is alive and reacting against man's actions, not bowing down and succumbing to man's supposed scientific superiority. Although the Gaia theory may not be entirely correct, I don't think it should be knocked down so readily. Nature will continue on in ways we cannot foresee long after humanity no longer exists.

Kate says

Dragged myself through this puppy. It was a tough go, but I somehow felt it was the environmentally responsible thing to do. Basically he makes the point very forcefully that we really have paved paradise. Damn. I recommend putting away all sharp objects and hiding anything that can be used to hang yourself before reading this book. Dead bird on cover says it all.
