

## THE BIGGEST MYSTERY

Extinction does suck [cover story, 7/16]. Editor Ted Taylor really nailed it! He presented a breadth of scientific research and opinion about the timeline/immediacy/certainty of climate collapse and left us with a “What Can We Do About It?” idea feast. What none of the evidence presented disputes is the end result of the trajectory of the course we are on now. We are living on a dying planet. The lack of constraints on corporate capitalism means they — these “corporate people” — will exploit our habitat until it collapses. The 200 species a day currently going extinct and the human suffering already occurring means nothing to these corporate capitalists.

The biggest mystery of all is why the majority of Americans are sitting by, allowing our elected officials (or are they corporate employees?) to determine the collapse of our civilization. Bolstered by scientific predictions of “small numbers of humans surviving” perhaps we think “mass culling — guaranteed” is actually a good idea and we have some magical thinking that it won’t be me and my beloveds who are culled.

After three days of 90-degree weather the blossoms drop off the beans I planted. After six days of over 90 degrees my cherries, apples and pears stop growing and it takes another week of cooler weather for them to start again, but they never catch up. There will be smaller and smaller yields. Like Guy McPherson said, it isn’t that humans can’t survive the 5 to 6 degree heat increase, it’s that the plants can’t adapt quickly enough to the climate changes to grow. No plants, no life.

Personally, I think he is right. We have only a couple years to alter course. Just depends on what we are willing to let go of — and what we are willing to fight for to keep. It is in our hands. What are you doing that is more important than joining the climate movement?

Debby McGee  
Eugene

## DRIVE TO DOMINATE

Guy McPherson [cover story, July 16] joins the long list of doomsayers who manage to miss the cardinal realities of the impending eco-catastrophe: Civilization is based on domestication, aka domination of nature. This is the basic reason all civilizations self-destruct; their defining drive to control is the cause.

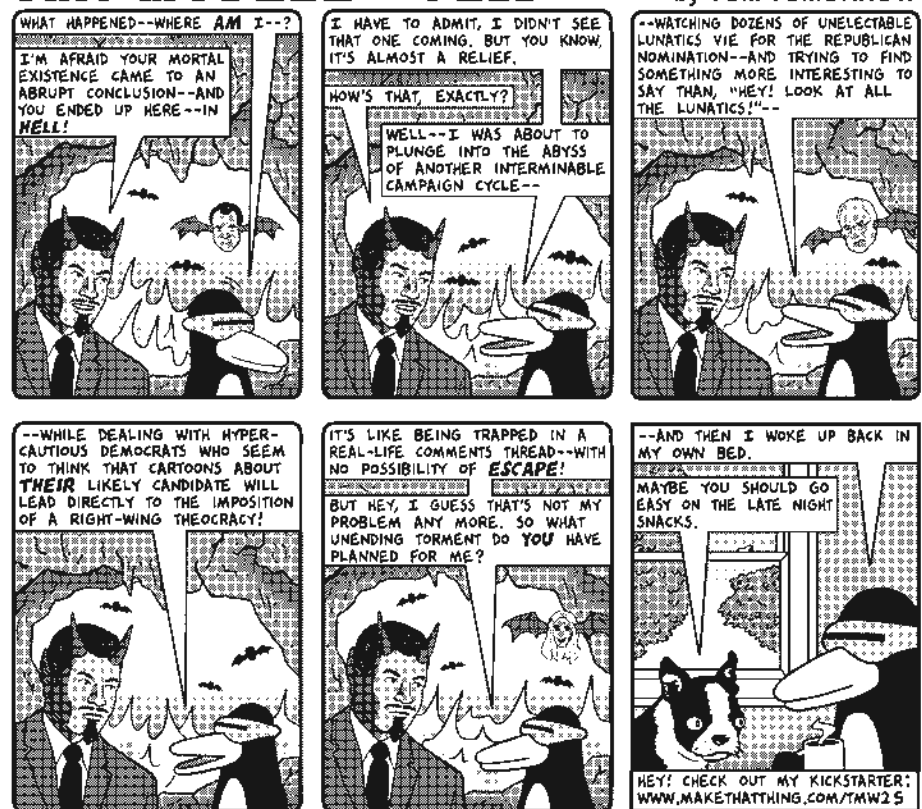
Global overheating is a function of global industrialization. Full stop. Technology is the problem, not the solution. Never neutral, it embodies the dominant civilizational value of domination. It promises to fix what it has itself caused.

Mass society has erased community, so that the door is ever more open to pathologies of all kinds. The individual has virtually no operable responsibility or accountability in mass society, where experts rule and isolation reigns.

None of these facts are part of the discourse of liberal superficiality that guarantees a worsening reality.

John Zerzan  
Eugene

## THIS MODERN WORLD



## EMBARRASSING DESIGN

After months of waiting, we finally saw in *The Register-Guard* the rendering of the proposed new Eugene City Hall. The article had quotes from some of our city councilors who used the terms “elegant,” “clever” and “doesn’t look like Eugene and could be anywhere.”

I found the design *very Eugene*: mediocre, not creative, without energy and very unimaginative. It will be the “Capstone” of Eugene for ceremonial architecture.

Mediocre and unimaginative might also describe the decision makers who will allow this to represent our city.

Remove the trees, the people, the bicycle and the imaginary future buildings from the drawing, and this proposed design is as “elegant” as a box of Wheaties — or when tailored for Eugene, a tofu cereal box. An energy efficient building is expected today, but that doesn’t by itself equal great architecture.

With the talent or reputation of the architects assembled for this project, one would expect much more. I know that Miller and Hull, the architects who made the firm’s reputation, are no longer engaged, but the generation of architects who took over the firm should be able to do much better.

If this is the best we can do under the circumstances, then the design and the resources to make it should be put into a drawer or on a shelf to wait until we can do much better. Embarrassed,

Otto P. Poticha, FAIA  
Eugene

## A BETTER OPTION

Regarding “Conifers are Better,” George R. Hermach’s unpersuasive letter July 9 opposing the logging of Douglas firs to restore oak savannas at Buford Park, I suggest we consider the benefits of this ecosystem within a more factual framework. Hermach apparently believes oak savannas have little value or history

in western Oregon, that conifers are more naturally adapted to our environment and that Buford Park will become more wild and diverse if left unmanaged. His view is erroneous and shortsighted.

Oak savannas and oak woodlands have been a vital part of the Willamette Valley landscape for millennia, contributing to the diverse mosaic of vegetation that includes prairies and deciduous hardwood forests (maples, ash) as well as conifers. Most of our old-growth coniferous forests have been logged, as Hermach states, but oak savannas have also been reduced to less than 2 percent of the land area they historically inhabited in the Willamette Valley.

These remnant oak savannas and grasslands support more than 150 species of plants and wildlife in decline, including Oregon’s state bird, the Western meadowlark. Hermach may see a barren environment when oaks shed their leaves, but he overlooks the lichens and mosses that grow thick and green on their host trees during the fall and winter.

Hermach considers the restoration of oak savanna “folly,” forcing nature to move backward, but it is naïve and regressive to think that Buford Park, situated less than 5 miles from Eugene-Springfield and visited by tens of thousands of park users each year, could be left undisturbed to evolve into the coniferous wilderness he seeks. The biodiversity we desire will require active management to suppress invasive weeds and encourage the growth of healthy forests, prairies, savannas and wetlands. Thinning Douglas firs and liberating the oaks is a better option.

Kurt S. Kamin  
Eugene

## NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE

Guy McPherson’s conclusion that humans should counsel themselves into an acceptance of impending extinction [cover story, 7/16] is not only irresponsible but also reeks of privilege and a profound lack of love for the living. Those of us

who recognize that we are in the throes of a mass extinction caused by human activity should not be wringing our hands and attending support groups, we should be fighting for existence with all of the passion and dedication that the living world warrants.

It is no secret that those contributing most to catastrophic climate change are not omnipresent forces but material institutions with names and addresses. Just as the material Earth is being destroyed, the infrastructure most responsible for planetary destruction can be dismantled. The time for asking nicely is long past. If everything is at stake then we should be resisting ongoing industrial processes like we have nothing left to lose. If you love something, you fight for it.

Sam Krop  
Eugene

## BIRTH AND OUR FUTURE

Many of us worry about the human future. We worry about climate change, natural disasters, war. What does the future hold for ourselves, our families, our cultures and our planet?

Our ways of birthing have a profound effect on our health and happiness and the nature of our communities and nations. Studies have shown that the level of militarism in a society is directly related to the extent to which mother and baby are separated after birth. Anthropologists have found that nearly all of the traditional cultures on the planet have the belief that the colostrum, a nourishing substance that comes before the breast milk when a baby is newly born, is bad for the baby, thus requiring separation of mom from baby for a couple days until her milk comes in.

In another example of societal customs that separate mother and baby, for most of the 20th century in industrialized nations, babies were taken to nurseries immediately after birth to be cared for by nurses, and returned to their mothers a few times a day if that.

Recent scientific research shows that the newly born baby is conscious, alert and able to interact. The hours after birth are part of a “primal period” in which mom and baby are exquisitely sensitive to learning feelings and interactions that are imprinted for life.

Another big event at the start of life is the seeding of the microbiome, the bacteria and other microorganisms that live in and on the human body. These bacteria are mostly protective to the human host and play a role in developing a strong immune system. The most beneficial bacteria for a newly born person are thought to be those associated with the mother. This new field of knowledge is influencing childbirth practices.

One additional new field of study is epigenetics. This refers to external modifications to DNA that turn genes on or off. These modifications do not change the DNA sequence. Many factors in childbirth, such as medications given or method of delivery might cause epigenetic changes which would cause a gene to be expressed or not, for better or for worse.

Do you want your children and descendants to be alert, healthy and smart