

What's going on?

In the past two centuries, a flicker of time in the ancient story of Earth, human activities have caused a rapid deterioration in the state of our natural environment and the complex systems that support our existence.

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Our impact on other life forms and the natural world is profound:

- * Some 12% of bird species, 23% of mammals, 25% of conifers and 32% of amphibians are currently threatened with extinction.
- * We have already destroyed about 50% of Earth's original forest cover.
- * Climate change is the overriding environmental issue of our time. Shifting weather patterns threaten food production and rising sea levels increase the risk of catastrophic flooding.

Deep inequalities also divide the burgeoning human family:

- * The richest 10% of adults in the world own 85% of global household wealth.
- * Every week 42,000 people die from diseases related to low-quality drinking water and lack of sanitation, 90% of them children under five.
- * Global military expenditure in 2008 was estimated at US\$1,464 billion, up 45% since 1999. In comparison, the cost of meeting basic needs (the Millennium Development Goals) for 2010 for all countries was estimated at US\$143 billion.
- * 1.36 billion people live on less than US\$1.25 per day.



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UNUSUAL ANIMALS **FRILL-NECKED LIZARD**

The Frill-necked Lizard is found mainly in northern Australia and southern New Guinea. It lives mostly in trees and can grow to 91cm in length. When the lizard is frightened, or during courtship, it gapes its mouth, and its neck frill flares out.

PHOTO: LAURA BERTOLA

