



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on December 11, 2013

## Our Fragile Planet

Let's examine a few statements reflecting a vision thought to be beyond question. "The world that we live in is beautiful but fragile." "The 3rd rock from the sun is a fragile oasis." Here are a couple of Earth Day quotes: "Remember that Earth needs to be saved every single day." "Remember the importance of taking care of our planet. It's the only home we have!" Such statements, along with apocalyptic predictions, are stock in trade for environmental extremists and non-extremists alike. Worse yet is the fact that this fragile-earth indoctrination is fed to our youth from kindergarten through college. Let's examine just how fragile the earth is.



The 1883 eruption of the Krakatoa volcano, in present-day Indonesia, had the force of 200 megatons of TNT. That's the equivalent of 13,300 15-kiloton atomic bombs, the kind that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. Preceding that eruption was the 1815 Tambora eruption, also in present-day Indonesia, which holds the record as the largest known volcanic eruption. It spewed so much debris into the atmosphere, blocking sunlight, that 1816 became known as the "Year Without a Summer" or "Summer That Never Was." It led to crop failures and livestock death in much of the Northern Hemisphere and caused the worst famine of the 19th century. The A.D. 535 Krakatoa eruption had such force that it blotted out much of the light and heat of the sun for 18 months and is said to have led to the Dark Ages. Geophysicists estimate that just three volcanic eruptions, Indonesia (1883), Alaska (1912) and Iceland (1947), spewed more carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere than all of mankind's activities in our entire history.

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How has our fragile earth handled floods? China is probably the world capital of gigantic floods. The 1887 Yellow River flood cost between 900,000 and 2 million lives. China's 1931 flood was worse, yielding an estimated death toll between 1 million and 4 million. But China doesn't have a monopoly on floods. Between 1219 and 1530, the Netherlands experienced floods costing about 250,000 lives.

What about the impact of earthquakes on our fragile earth? There's Chile's 1960 Valdivia earthquake, coming in at 9.5 on the Richter scale, a force equivalent to 1,000 atomic bombs going off at the same time. The deadly 1556 earthquake in China's Shaanxi province devastated an area of 520 miles. There's the more recent December 2004 magnitude-9.1 earthquake in the Indian Ocean that caused the deadly Boxing Day tsunami, and a deadly March 2011 magnitude-9.0 earthquake struck eastern Japan.

Our fragile earth faces outer space terror. Two billion years ago, an asteroid hit earth, creating the Vredefort crater in South Africa. It has a radius of 118 miles, making it the world's largest impact crater. In Ontario, there's the Sudbury Basin, resulting from a meteor strike 1.8 billion years ago, which has an 81-mile diameter, making it the second-largest impact structure on earth. Virginia's Chesapeake



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Bay crater is a bit smaller, about 53 miles wide. Then there's the famous but puny Meteor Crater in Arizona, which is not even a mile wide.

I've pointed out only a tiny portion of the cataclysmic events that have struck the earth — ignoring whole categories, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, lightning strikes, fires, blizzards, landslides and avalanches. Despite these cataclysmic events, the earth survived. My question is: Which of these powers of nature can be matched by mankind? For example, can mankind duplicate the polluting effects of the 1815 Tambora volcanic eruption or the asteroid impact that wiped out dinosaurs? It is the height of arrogance to think that mankind can make significant parametric changes in the earth or can match nature's destructive forces.

Occasionally, environmentalists spill the beans and reveal their true agenda. Barry Commoner said, "Capitalism is the earth's number one enemy." Amherst College professor Leo Marx said, "On ecological grounds, the case for world government is beyond argument." With the decline of the USSR, communism has lost considerable respectability and is now repackaged as environmentalism and progressivism.

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