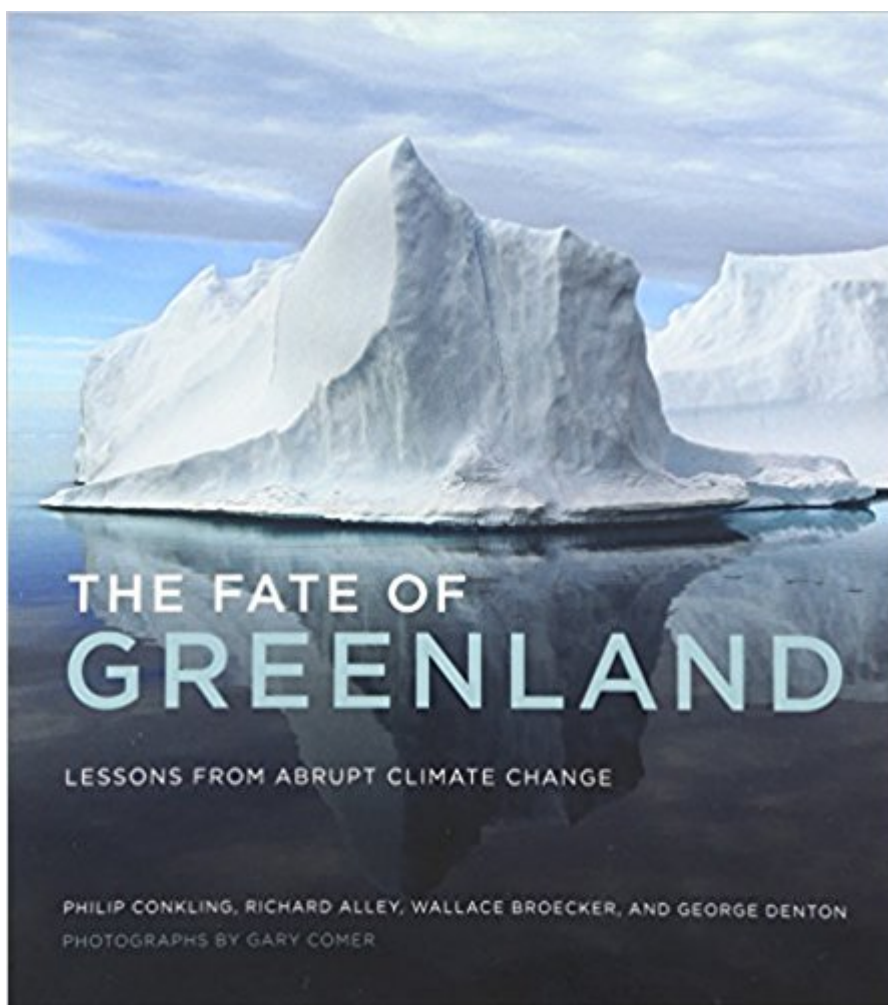


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The Fate Of Greenland: Lessons From Abrupt Climate Change (MIT Press)



Synopsis

Viewed from above, Greenland offers an endless vista of whiteness interrupted only by scattered ponds of azure-colored melt water. Ninety percent of Greenland is covered by ice; its ice sheet, the largest outside Antarctica, stretches almost 1,000 miles from north to south and 600 miles from east to west. But this stark view of ice and snow is changing -- and changing rapidly. Greenland's ice sheet is melting; the dazzling, photogenic display of icebergs breaking off Greenland's rapidly melting glaciers has become a tourist attraction. The Fate of Greenland documents Greenland's warming with dramatic color photographs and investigates episodes in Greenland's climate history for clues about what happens when climate change is abrupt rather than gradual. Greenland's climate past and present could presage our climate future. Abrupt climate change would be cataclysmic: the melting of Greenland's ice shelf would cause sea levels to rise twenty-four feet worldwide; lower Manhattan would be underwater and Florida's coastline would recede to Orlando. The planet appears to be in a period of acute climate instability, exacerbated by carbon dioxide we pour into the atmosphere. As this book makes clear, it is in all of our interests to pay attention to Greenland.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

...the book gives a refreshingly clear picture of the science of studying climate change and of the curious, dedicated scientists in action. (Publishers Weekly) This book teaches us a lot about how to do science and how to investigate difficult problems about the causes of environmental change. It

shows that abrupt climate changes really have happened and puts forward likely mechanisms. It tells us a great deal about the wonders of Greenland and how important the country is as a window on to the recent glaciations. And it makes the whole idea of sudden, grave climate shocks arising from greenhouse emissions seem terribly plausible, even if it does not predict any particular shocks. It is not a story about lands' end, but it is a very fine tribute to [Gary] Comer. (Times Higher Education) Scientists and non-scientists from all walks of life will find this an eloquent and timely read. (Rick Docksai The Futurist) [A] gripping rationale for their simple plea -- 'Pay attention to Greenland.' (Bud Ward The Yale Forum) This book captures a unique view behind the scenes at a special time in climate science. It is an important work for several reasons: it connects past and potential future climate shifts that have large societal impacts to the mechanics of how the climate system works, and provides a glimpse of the personal detective work the authors have each engaged in as they and others have constructed our present understanding. It also captures well-informed views of how climate changes have worked in the recent past from the perspectives of scientists who have been at the forefront of unraveling aspects of this system. The Fate of Greenland is an excellent reference for establishing a working view of the planet on climate and glacial timescales. This is the right book, with the right tone, to bring this subject to a general audience. (Mark Fahnstock, Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, University of New Hampshire) This is the best accounting of abrupt climate change available -- best because the science is on-target and nuanced and the storytelling is superb. (Peter Kareiva, Chief Scientist and Vice President, The Nature Conservancy) While abrupt changes in the Earth's climate system occur with some frequency, the drivers of these dramatic events are poorly understood. Nowhere are such occurrences more prominent than in Greenland, where several abrupt changes have occurred during the period since the arrival of Norse settlers in the 10th century. In this accessible, illuminating, and richly illustrated book, several prominent climate scientists focus on the case of Greenland to explore the causes and consequences of rapid climate change events. (Oran R. Young, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, University of California at Santa Barbara)

Philip Conkling is Founder and President of the Island Institute in Maine. Richard Alley, a glaciologist, is Evan Pugh Professor of Geosciences and Associate of the Earth and Environmental Systems Institute at Penn State. Richard Alley, a glaciologist, is Evan Pugh Professor of Geosciences and Associate of the Earth and Environmental Systems Institute at Penn State. Wallace Broecker, an oceanographer, is Newberry Professor of Geology at Columbia

University and a winner of the Crafoord Prize in Geosciences. George Denton, a geologist, is Professor of Geological Sciences and Quaternary Studies at the University of Maine.

After reading this book, I have a better understanding of how they are researching climate change and how ice core data can be used to back trace how the climate once was. Ice coring sounds like a fairly simple procedure, but in reality, extracting data from it is a long and cumbersome process that requires much knowledge and technical skill. In the end, however, it answers questions about where our climate has been, and what factors were in play in the world in various stages. Far from simply discussing ice coring, the book also details geological changes that have been found in Greenland and how they tie in with other climate data. Overall, this book presents the steps that have been taken in Greenland to unravel the mystery of climate change. Greenland is, in many ways, the canary in the coal mine and data extracted there is very useful in determining where we are most likely headed. The book presents a scenario that is not rosy, but is also not disastrous either. Instead, it presents what the best scientific thinking of today is about how change is occurring. It is written in language that a lay person can understand, however it is not easy reading. In the end, all of the authors are PhDs and their writing does reflect that. I would be remiss if I did not point out the spectacular photography present throughout the book. All in color, there are very spectacular photos of glaciers, ice and numerous geological features. This is a great book for catching up on the latest in research and for a non-alarmist point of view. Just expect to spend a little time going over some areas several times if you are not up on geology. I highly recommend this book.

This book puts many years of scientific research concerning the linkage of Greenland and the Arctic into intelligent layman's terms. It explains how and by whom the data was gathered, and explains the proxy methods when they are used. Much of the information that they present is quite recent. I consider myself quite familiar with this subject, but there were quite a number of investigations that I was unaware of, with data very relevant to the subject. If you are looking for reassurance that global warming is not serious, this is not the book for you. While assiduously avoiding alarmist type of writing, the data that is presented does not bode well for us. Well worth the money, whether you are a professional or an interested citizen.

I bought this for my brother who was stationed in Greenland quite a few years ago. He was most interested to see the changes that have taken place over the years, and saddened by them. Since he is also a hydrologist, he was very interested in the science findings.

This book is a necessary read for those interested in climate science. It describes the alteration of the oceanic links that are occurring with the melting of the Greenland glacier that are a frightening cause great concern.

I love Greenland, it has been part of my country for many years, and just as my Queen of Denmark, Greenland is in my heart. And my sister Lise went there this september from Denmark, lucky her. The book was very interesting with amazing pictures. Birthe

2011's "The Fate of Greenland" is a very nicely packaged compilation of recent research on climate change, particularly on the phenomenon of abrupt climate change. The four authors, experts in geology and paleoclimatology, have spent the last decade conducting field research in Greenland, on behalf of a wealthy private donor. Their focus was the Little Ice Age, its impact on a now vanished Norse colony, and its possible implications for global climate change. There is much to like about the book. The stunning photography, in particular of the high mountains, glaciers, and fjords of Greenland, would have been worth a book all by itself. The chapters describing the Little Ice Age and its visible effects in Greenland and elsewhere are fascinating, if a little uneven due to the differing writing styles of the authors. The text imparts a good sense of the rapidly evolving status and exciting developments in the science of paleoclimatology. There are also things to dislike about the book. The text never quite gets its tone right, ranging from simple and clear to tedious and lecturing to science-laden jargon. The book takes three-quarters of its length to cautiously and thoughtfully string together observations, theories, and suppositions about a description of abrupt climate change. The conclusion turns into a bit of a scientific rant on anthropogenic global warming, dismissing competing scientific evidence and arguments in favor of an urgent plea to reduce CO2 emissions. The authors can't document the precise hazard of human-triggered abrupt climate change that they fear, but argue for a strong response on the admittedly small chance that it could happen. "The Fate of Greenland" gets a qualified recommendation to readers interested in and already broadly knowledgeable about climate and climate change.

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