

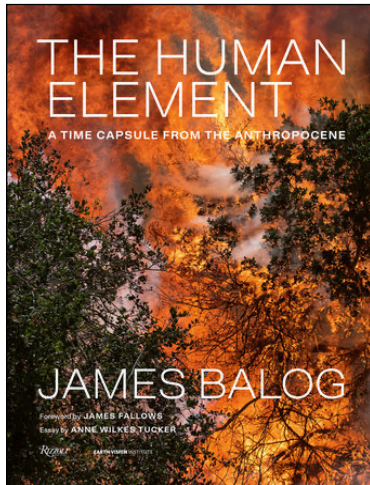


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**THE HUMAN ELEMENT:
A Time Capsule from the Anthropocene**
By James Balog

Essay by Anne Wilkes Tucker, Foreword by James Fallows

Hardcover / 456 pages / 350 color photographs / 12" x 16"

\$85.00 U.S. / ISBN: 978-0-8478-7088-2

Rizzoli New York / ON SALE: October 2021

**"THIS IS A PROFOUND STATEMENT BY A FORCE OF NATURE ON THE FORCES OF NATURE.
THE SCALE, SCOPE, AND VERSATILITY OF HIS VISION IS WITHOUT COMPARE."**

—Dennis Dimick, emeritus editor for the environment, *National Geographic*

In this magnum opus about human impact on our planet—from the threat of animal extinction to catastrophic wildfires, global warming as visualized through glacier melt, and the increased ferocity of historic floods and storms—world-renowned environmental photographer James Balog presents four decades of his innovative, ground-breaking photography in THE HUMAN ELEMENT. Balog has traveled more than a million miles, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and from the Alps and Andes to the Himalaya. With images heightening awareness of climate change and endangered species, he is one of the most relevant photographers in the world today. This historic work is an environmental call to arms.

"We depend on the stability of the fundamental elements of our world. An imbalance in the human element leads to an imbalance in the other elements. People are the only element that can choose to restore balance...

No boundary separates people from nature. In damaging nature, we are damaging ourselves.

In protecting nature, we are protecting ourselves. — James Balog

The evidence of our 21st-century environment, based on irrefutable and unmistakable evidence, is that human needs, behaviors, and technologies are radically changing the nature of nature. When Balog first started seeing the world through a camera, he was a typical environmental romantic—enraptured by the natural world, longing for philosophical and spiritual union with it, and wanting to celebrate its beauty and grandeur. But reality forced him to engage with other kinds of scenes. From that exploration, summarized in this monumental book, comes a new vision of the relationship between human nature and the rest of the natural world.

Balog's investigation of human tectonics gives us fresh understanding of how the forces and deeds of humanity reshape fundamental characteristics of our environment. With essays and poems on such topics as witnessing the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, ascending into the treetops to photograph the giant sequoia Stagg, spending time as a wildland firefighter, creating the incredible Extreme Ice Survey to photographically monitor glacier melt, and even struggling through his own battle with cancer, this definitive book is an unprecedented collection of photographic art informed by scientific knowledge. Featuring 350 of Balog's most iconic images, THE HUMAN ELEMENT offers a truly unmatched view of our changing world—and a time capsule of humanity and our environment that may never be seen again.

About the author: **JAMES BALOG** is an avid mountaineer and the author of eight books. His 2018 award-winning film *The Human Element* has screened worldwide. Balog's Extreme Ice Survey (EIS) is the most extensive photographic study of glaciers ever conducted; his documentary, *Chasing Ice*, won an Emmy, an Oscar nomination, and many other awards. His photographs are in dozens of public and private art collections and have been extensively published in magazines and newspapers globally. **JAMES FALLOWS** is a longtime writer for the *Atlantic* and the author of 12 books, including the best-selling *Our Towns*—coauthored with his wife, Deborah Fallows—which was the basis of a 2021 HBO documentary. He has reported from around the world and has won the National Book Award and National Magazine Award. During the Carter Administration, he was the chief White House speechwriter. **ANNE WILKES TUCKER** is the curator emerita of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She founded the photography department in 1976, acquired more than 30,000 photographs, curated or co-curated more than 40 exhibitions, contributed articles to more than 150 magazines, books, and other catalogues, and lectured widely. Her honors, fellowships, and awards include being selected as "America's Best Curator" by *Time* in 2001.

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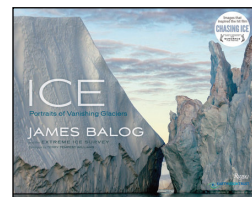
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ICE: PORTRAITS OF VANISHING GLACIERS

September 2012 / Hardcover / \$50.00 / ISBN: 978-0-8478-3886-8

"As the environmental photographer James Balog shows in his new book *Ice: Portraits of Vanishing Glaciers*, the deep ice of the poles is far from invulnerable. Balog's breathtaking pictures show how erosion and melting temperatures take their toll on the glaciers, shrinking and carving them. The result is dazzling to look at, but terrifying for the planet. – TIME.COM

JAMES BALOG PULL QUOTES FROM "THE HUMAN ELEMENT"

FIRE: Fire is a shape-shifting trickster. Fire is foe and fire is friend. Fire annihilates and fire rejuvenates. Fire purifies and fire terrifies. Fire cleanses and fire corrupts. Fire is an agent of human tectonics and fire is the result of human tectonics. The chaos of fire, ethereal and fiercely real at the same time, does credit to our cosmos. In fire is the transformation of the world, as the feedback loops of human tectonics twisting their dragon coils tighter and tighter around our lives in the Anthropocene.

AIR: Corrupt the health of the atmospheric lung and we corrupt the health of human lungs. Infinitesimal particles of soot, known as PM2.5, one-thirtieth the width of a human hair, course through the 1,500 linear feet of alveoli inside the moist caverns of our lungs. The soot is complicit in childhood asthma, chronic airway obstruction, low infant birth weight, and reduced life expectancy. And it makes us more susceptible to microbial terrorists like COVID-19 and influenza... A global lung, damaged and degraded, is the rude legacy our witless civilization is bestowing on those bright, shining faces of the innocent future.

WATER: Corrupted air alters weather, climate, and water. Dry weather gets drier, wet weather becomes wetter, and floods deeper. Winds howl harder. Glaciers melt and sea levels rise. Oceans get more acidic, and diatoms and plankton anchoring the marine food chain dissolve. Waters warm, and coral reefs die. The human enterprise is based on living within a specific niche of temperature and moisture. It is based, too, on a belief that we more or less know what the future holds for us and for our children. Moisture will come in certain ways, in certain seasons. Summers will be hot. Winters will be cold. The land will be here. The waters will be over there. But when those basic expectations change and weather has a violent mood disorder, it throws everything into disarray. The currents of human nature and nonhuman nature will keep mixing and merging in an unpredictable and unprecedented torrent. The storms of ruin lay sullen on the horizon, as humanity's unplanned, uncontrolled experiment with water and air continues.

ICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE: The chameleon forms and colors and textures of ice are so improbable, so exquisite, so elegant, that to me their beauty is celestial. But ice matters not just for aesthetic reasons. Ice is where we can see and hear and feel climate change in action. Ice responds to the touch of the air and water around it. When it melts, ice declares in a voice loud and clear that the Earth is warming... I love those time-lapse cameras. I have come to think of them as my sturdy little robot friends, clicking faithfully away, their eyes acting as surrogates for all humanity. Many of the cameras are still in the field as of this writing. Some picture sequences have gone on for the entire 13 years since EIS began in 2007, others only for a few months until they completed specific tasks. To date, the time-lapse archive is 1,361,682 images.

ANIMALS: Against the crushing weight of human tectonics, wildlife cannot compete. We take over or destroy habitat. We trap wild creatures and ship them all over the world. We kill animals for meat and for sport; for fear the animals are a threat (some can be); for the delusion that an animal's power and fitness can be harvested in potions and medications; and for trinkets of home decoration. We alter the climate that gives food, water, and living space to animals. Extinctions are happening at something like 100 to 1,000 times the natural rate. Human action may cause as many as a million species of animals and plants to go extinct in the decades to come. Between 1970 and 2016, there was a 68 percent decline in the populations of 4,400 species. The situation is dire.

TECHNOLOGY AND MY CANCER: Where has my myeloma come from? Perhaps it is just a consequence of bad genetic luck. But since no cancer has plagued our family, oncologists and epidemiologists have turned suspicious eyes on environmental contaminants, all of them products of the Anthropocene. Could exposure half a century ago have combined with another from a few years ago and triggered the mayhem of mutant cells? Who knows? When all is said and done, neither I, nor anyone else, will ever know what caused the myeloma. Cause and cure of myeloma are, then, opposite faces of human tectonics reshaping the nature of my own nature. The simple fact of my survival shows that I am, inescapably, a child of the Anthropocene. All of us are. We live longer and healthier, from birth to death, courtesy of the seething pipes and glittering clean rooms of the pharmaceutical industry. Against this raw fact, (this) nature boy must make his peace. Never mind that the toxic stew of human tectonics may have caused the myeloma in the first place.

CARBON: How ironic, how mysterious, how improbable it is that fate pushes me, grandson of those (coal) miners, into prying up questions about Earth matter; digging not with shovel and dynamite, but with pictures and words; digging not to extract coal, but to end the extraction of coal. To speak and live a different truth from theirs is a task I can no more avoid than they could avoid the coal seams. Yet only in our 50-year sliver of time do we comprehend what human minds never did before: burning the fossil residue of ancient life poisons our bodies and our world. People of the past never knew this. They did what was necessary in the harsh light of their moment. By the standards of today we cannot judge them. The urgent task now is to look in our own mirror. Will we shoulder the burdens of the present time with noble determination the way our ancestors did? Are we morally and ethically and intellectually lucid enough to respond in full measure to the knowledge we have about the negative consequences of carbon fuels?