

MARK CARWARDINE



On the wild thoughts that won't let him sleep. This month:

American nightmare

The US is in the middle of one of the worst assaults on the environment in recent history. You'd expect the Democrats to be at least a little environmentally friendly, but instead they seem to be delivering one nasty surprise after another.

For all Barack Obama's rhetoric on the campaign trail – "We are not acting as good stewards of God's Earth when our bottom line puts the size of our profits before the future of our planet" – his record is far from green.

Admittedly, he deserves praise for his new fuel-efficiency standards for cars and significant investments made in clean energy, but these are nothing compared with the nearly unmitigated string of disasters-in-waiting.

Impending legislation that will allow states to sidestep Clean Water Act standards and plans to gut the Clean Air Act (on the grounds that increased regulation might hinder the US economic recovery) are just the tip of the iceberg.

Obama is also proposing to extract vast quantities of coal from the American West for export to China and India. And he is poised to approve plans for a 2,700km oil pipeline from the tar sands of Alberta, in Canada, across 1,500 rivers to refineries on the coast of

Texas – on the grounds that it reduces US dependence on the global oil market.

Then there are the budget cuts. Apart from drastic reductions in funding for parks, there are plans to attach dozens of anti-environmental 'riders' to spending bills, allowing coal mines to dump more debris into rivers, for instance, and severely reducing protection for species such as wolves.

The banks and politicians made a complete hash



Barack Obama: "delivering one nasty surprise after another."



The banks and politicians made a hash of things and now the environment is paying the price."

of things – and now the environment is paying the price. It all sends me spinning into a state of despair. As Obama himself once wryly observed, "What Washington needs is adult supervision". Absolutely – now more than ever.

Mark Carwardine is a zoologist, photographer and TV presenter.