

GOVERNMENTS WILL MEET IN DUBAI for the COP28 UN climate summit on 30th November 2023, to assess progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It will come as no surprise to hear that we're nowhere near on track. We're stuffing it up.

There is now little chance of limiting the global average temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (the legally binding pledge made by world leaders at the 2015 Paris summit).

"The era of global boiling has arrived", according to the UN secretary general, António Guterres. "It is terrifying," he said. "And it is just the beginning." Pay attention to the news headlines – which are sounding increasingly like the beginning of a cataclysmic end-of-the-world science fiction movie – and you'll know instinctively that he is right.

A global pattern of record heatwaves, off-the-charts wildfires, devastating floods, droughts, crop failures, Antarctic and Arctic sea ice levels plummeting, and increasingly severe and more frequent storms are ringing alarm bells loud and clear. It's entirely consistent with all those scientific predictions and repeated warnings ever since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's first report in 1990. The only surprise is the rapidity of the change. What was once likened to Armageddon in slow motion seems to have speeded up.

This is all happening when the world is, on average, about 1.1°C hotter than pre-industrial times. Just imagine the dire consequences if we allow it to get much hotter.

Chances are we'll find out soon enough. According to research by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), we are highly likely to breach the magic level of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels between now and 2027. To begin with, it is likely to be on a temporary basis, but WMO predicts that we'll breach it with increasing frequency. That would send the world into "uncharted territory", the UN agency warned.

Yet many politicians continue to think only in the short-term. They dislike spending money on preventative action (unless it's to show military might) and their archetypal response is to prevaricate,

Want to comment?
Share your thoughts on Mark's column by sending an email to wildlifeletters@immediate.co.uk

A firefighting aeroplane sprays water on a fire on the Greek island of Rhodes in July 2023



"Complacency is driving a wrecking ball through climate commitments"

MARK CARWARDINE

OPINION

procrastinate and negotiate. Such complacency is driving a wrecking ball through international climate commitments.

I used to put it down to the fact that many politicians simply didn't understand global warming with all its subtle complexities and unknowns (and, of course, their degrees in the arts and politics, combined with an innate suspicion of scientific experts, really haven't helped).

But how many more 'unnatural disasters' will it take for them to sit up and take notice?

Unusually high temperatures in London or a dystopian few days in New York (under an orange smoke cloud) clearly haven't done it. Extreme heat and weather events wreaking financial havoc to the tourist industry in southern Europe might have raised a few political eyebrows. How about the UN's forecast that by 2050 1.2 billion people will become climate migrants, displaced from their homes due to the climate crisis? Perhaps

even that is too many parliamentary terms away to slap them in the face?

Some world leaders do understand and are acting accordingly. President Joe Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (passed despite intense opposition from powerful industry lobbies and every

Republican in Congress) is the biggest single investment into decarbonisation ever attempted. The US Government is ploughing \$369bn into America's climate transition.

Other world leaders seem to think that backing away from green policies might be a vote-winner. In my opinion, they

are wrong. In the past year or so, governments from Spain to Australia with (at best) a lackadaisical attitude towards climate change, have been severely punished at the ballot box.

Countless voters are waking up faster than many politicians, so I'd be surprised if global boiling wasn't top of the agenda in all future general elections. **W**

"How many more 'unnatural disasters' will it take for them to sit up and take notice?"

