

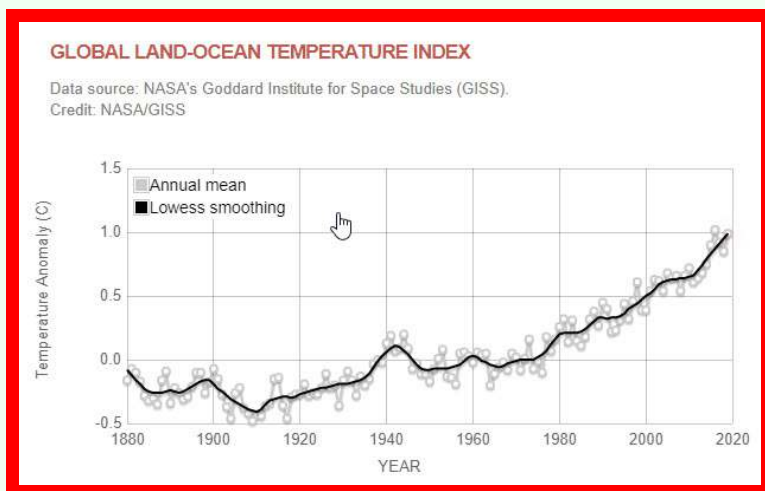
I t's a Changed World

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News in newspapers and on TV is of the coronavirus and Covid-19, businesses and schools reopening after being shut-down, wild fires in the West, tropical storms and torrential rain in the South and East, politicians and the coming election. What I write about is totally different, a phoebe at one of my bird feeders, going for a drive and looking for ducks with my binoculars, the decline in number of most species of birds though a few, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, wild turkey, sandhill crane, Canada goose, cardinal, have increased. But birds as a whole have declined greatly.

Newspapers printing my stories get some letters about my articles which they forward to me and I get some messages on e-mail. Both indicate there are people reading my stories about the outdoors. And I wonder, are my articles that interesting or do they just provide a break from the calamitous news of the day?

I like to hear from readers, particularly readers who ask questions that I can answer in the form of articles or that suggest subjects for articles. "Neil," or "Mr. Case, why don't you write about global warming?"



There's a subject for many articles. I believe global warming is happening and I've written about it, several times. I've also read everything about it that I've found. Here's an interesting statement about warming temperatures. Nine of the ten warmest years on record, around the world, have occurred in the last ten years.

I think about my personal experience and global warming. Last winter, for instance, was the mildest and had the least snow of any year I've lived in northern Indiana. We only had to shovel snow off the sidewalk a few times last winter and we only had to have the driveway plowed twice. When we moved here, more years ago than I'm going to tell, we had snow plowed out of the driveway several times each winter. We haven't even had frost this fall though it's almost the end of September.

Most of the leaves on the trees are still green. Most of the leaves on sumac are also still green and sumac leaves are usually bright red by this late in the year. A few acorns have fallen from the burr oak trees in our yard, but not many and there are no nuts beneath the big walnut tree out by our barn. Goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace have bloomed.

While I've been writing, looking up now and then from the computer screen and out the window, I've seen two turkey vultures fly over. Turkey vultures have usually gone south well before this. As the weather gets colder, carcasses, the food of vultures, freeze. Vultures have weak bills. They can't tear into frozen carcasses. So they go south.

As I wrote in a previous article, I'm still seeing robins, though not many, and an occasional catbird, and ducks, though robins and catbirds and ducks should have migrated, gone south, by this time of year. But I saw robins, though again not many, every month last winter, in December, January and February. Seeing a robin in March, or earlier, used to be a sign of spring, an early sign, but no more.

Mourning doves came to the bird feeder outside my dining room window all winter last year and they're coming to my feeder now. Seeing a mourning dove in March, like seeing a robin, used to be a sign of spring. When I was a boy seeing a mourning dove in March, or a robin, was a sign of good luck as well as of spring. That was in northern Iowa, but it was about the same latitude, the same distance north of the Equator, as northern Indiana where I live now.

It's a changed world, and change, in nature, is often what I write about.

The mourning dove is a member of the dove family, Columbidae. The bird is also known as the American mourning dove, the rain dove, and colloquially as the turtle dove, and was once known as the Carolina pigeon and Carolina turtledove. It is one of the most abundant and widespread of all North American birds. Wikipedia