News
EarthBeat



A scene from the 2017 documentary "Chasing Coral." (Netflix)



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Let's face it: The coronavirus lockdowns across the country and around the globe leave a lot of free time.

According to AFP, the French wire service, upwards of one third of the world's population is under some type of movement restriction in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Restaurants and museums are closed. Concerts are canceled. Baseball's opening day is delayed.

In between at-home workouts and virtual happy hours with friends, many of us have turned to our TVs to help fill the void. Even as a reporter, there's only so much news you can watch, and with sports limited to replays of classic games, streaming services are proving the much-needed leisure rabbit hole.

Luckily for EarthBeat readers, there's no shortage of environmental programming to check out and catch up on during this social interregnum. So if you've grown weary of binging "Love is Blind" and "Tiger King" or need a break from re-watching "The Office" for the fifth time, here's your eco-survey of the major streaming platforms.

[Before we begin, we're leaving out anything not included with subscriptions, so that includes popular documentaries like "Planet Earth," "An Inconvenient Truth", "Gasland," and "Chasing Ice" and films like "Promised Land," "Dark Water," "Avatar" and "Erin Brockavich."]

Let's start at Netflix, where the eight-part **"Our Planet" series** (2019) presents visually stunning looks at the earth's ecosystems and biodiversity, while addressing how climate change, water shortages and ocean dumping threaten habitats and their inhabitants. Plus, who can pass up narration by Sir David Attenborough?

Two specials from the PBS Nova series look at the science of climate change (**"Decoding the Weather Machine,"** 2018) and the Flint water crisis (**"Poisoned Water,"** 2017).

On the **"Bill Nye Saves the World"** series, the popular host has episodes exploring climate change and water shortages. (And for good measure, there's even one on how vaccines work.)

A few other Netflix docs:

- **"Chasing Coral"** (2017), another visually impressive film, this one focused on the disappearance of the world's coral reefs as a result of warming ocean waters.
- **"A Plastic Ocean"** (2016), explores the environmental impacts of plastic waste in the world's oceans.
- **"Cowspiracy"** (2014), examines the impact of large-scale factory farms and animal agriculture on deforestation, resource depletion and greenhouse gas emissions. [Read here for more.]
- **"Catching the Sun"** (2015), looks at the economics of the global solar energy industry.

On Amazon Prime, the prime environmental feature brings together two national treasures -- the national park system and documentarian Ken Burns -- with his 12-hour series **"The National Parks – America's Best Idea"** (2009). You can also check out Burns' 2012 series **"The Dust Bowl"** at a more digestible three episodes.

Amazon also hosts two major climate documentaries, the 2015 film **"This Changes Everything"** based on the Naomi Klein book of the same name, and the 2014 Emmy-winning, nine-episode series **"Years of Living Dangerously."** Along with that, it houses a number of PBS Frontline environmental investigations, including **"Climate of Doubt"** (2012), **"War on the EPA"** (2018), **"Blackout in Puerto Rico"** (2018), and **"Inside Japan's Nuclear Meltdown"** (2012).

Over at Disney Plus, you can find the full National Geographic catalog, including:

- **"America's National Parks"** (2015), its own tour of the national parks;
- **"One Strange Rock"** (2017), the Will Smith-narrated exploration of our planet;
- **"Paris to Pittsburgh"** (2018), a look at impacts of climate change and people responding to it following President Trump's pledge to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

And for family movie night, what's better than a visit to a post-human Earth overrun with trash and one robot left to clean it all in Pixar's 2008 animated film **"Wall-E."**

At HBO, you can rewatch 2004's "The Day After Tomorrow" climate thriller. Its own collection of documentaries include the 2019 climate film **"Ice of Fire"** (narrated and produced by Leonardo Dicaprio); Spike Lee's 2006 **"When the Levees Broke"**

examination of post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans; and **"Mann v. Ford"** (2011), a look back at a lawsuit brought by the Ramapo Mountain Indians against the Ford Motor Company over toxic waste dumping on their land. If you're looking for laughs, a running theme in the first season of **"Veep"** (fair warning: not for the kids, lots of language) is Vice President Selina Meyer's Clean Jobs Commission; the "Catherine" episode follows the fallout from an oil exec's appointment to the taskforce. Or why not revisit **"Game of Thrones"** but this time watch it as the allegory for climate change that it really is.

For some lighter options, Hulu has a number of eco-episodes from some favorite sitcoms. Among them, the "Greenzo" episode on **"30 Rock"** and the **"Community"** episode on "Environmental Science" where the Greendale gang celebrate "Green Week." Speaking of, Hulu has a documentary about Earth Day (appropriately titled **"Earth Day"**), and offers an animated version of the classic **"Dr. Seuss' The Lorax"** (tnot the 2012 feature-length film; to watch that, you'll likely have to rent or buy it).

So there you have it, a quick tour of the streaming world's environmental content. Missed one of your favorites? Drop us a message on Instagram or Facebook.

Happy watching.

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A look at what's new on EarthBeat this week:

- Environmental groups have reoriented their work in the wake of the new normal brought by the coronavirus pandemic. Several Catholic organizations spoke with me about how they're shifting and the effects of the pandemic on the upcoming Earth Day and *Laudato Si*' anniversaries.
- In one of this week's Lenten Daily Food Reflections, Brenna Davis pondered questions of scarcity and abundance in times of uncertainty. Catch up on the whole series here.
- Freelance writer Cody Nelson introduces us to Matt Russell: a fifth-generation farmer and executive director of Iowa Interfaith Power & Light who's combined faith and environmentalism to advocate agriculture as a climate solution.

- For this week's Small Earth Story, Marguerite Sheehan, amid coronavirus anxieties, is finding nourishment from health foods, prayer and the scene outside her bay window.

Other climate-related news from this week:

- What's in the coronavirus relief bill in terms of climate measures? Not much, but also not much for oil companies. The New York Times digs into the details.
- While the world grapples with a pandemic, the largest locust plague in 50 years is destroying crops and threatening famine in East Africa and the Middle East, Inside Climate News reports. Scientists say climate change has contributed to the proliferation.
- A federal district judge ordered a full environmental review of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The Bismarck Tribune reports it is unclear if the pipeline will remain in operation while a review is conducted.
- People living in polluted areas are more likely to suffer underlying health issues that make them more susceptible to the novel coronavirus. The Texas Observer has the story from counties around Houston. Meanwhile, the U.S. Environmental Agency, citing the virus, is relaxing its pollution-reporting requirements.
- The Great Barrier Reef has experienced its third major bleaching event in five years, CBS News reports, what climate scientists have called "unprecedented" and tied to climate change.
- Global wind power capacity grew about 20% in 2019 driven by record growth in offshore windfarms, the Guardian reports.
- What might be the key to surviving both the coronavirus pandemic and climate change? Perhaps a shared sense of humanity, writes Yvette Cabrera at Grist.

Upcoming Event:

On April 3 Franciscan Sr. Ilia Delio will lead an online conversation on the moment presented by the coronavirus outbreak, one fraught with challenges but also filled with possibility for a new planetary faith. Know of other faith and climate events that have moved online in response to the coronavirus? Share them by posting to our Events Calendar..

Closing beat:

On the theme of viewing options, we know that many of the national parks are closed up to prevent the temptation of group gatherings and limit the spread of the coronavirus. But that doesn't mean you still can't visit them.

A number of parks have set up virtual tours and webcams so their natural attractions can still be enjoyed from living rooms. That includes Old Faithful, proving that even amid a pandemic, the world's most famous geyser keeps on erupting.

A reminder of constancy in a time of uncertainty.

Thanks for reading.

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This story appears in the **EarthBeat Weekly** feature series. View the full series.