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## The Ten Worst Man-Made Environmental Disasters

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Join PDA's Stop Global Warming/Environmental Issue Organizing Team (IOT); [learn more here.](#)  
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As oil threatens the Gulf Coast, a list of 10 other disasters both forgotten and infamous, from the Dust Bowl to Bhopal.

As environmental calamity for the Gulf Coast appears imminent, GlobalPost looks at 10 other man-made environmental disasters—both forgotten and infamous—that could have been prevented.

(Read about the [animal species](#) most at risk from the Gulf oil spill.)

### The Dust Bowl

The market-driven agricultural practices of U.S. farmers—plowing the virgin topsoil of the Great Plains and monoculture farming—led to one of the most disastrous ecological events in the nation's history. Between 1930 and 1940, drought conditions caused severe dust storms, some reaching 10,000 feet in the sky and called "Black" because so much dust was in the air. Millions of people were displaced and the catastrophe compounded the Great Depression, called the country's "most hard time."



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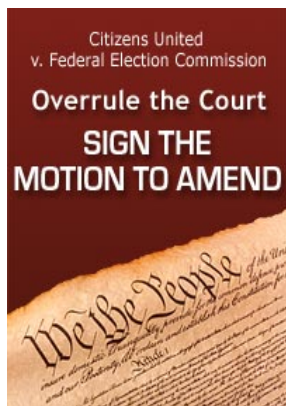
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Dust bowl of 1935 in Stratford, Texas. (NOAA Photo Library, Historic NWS collectio

### Poison in Minamata Bay

From 1932 to 1968, the Chisso Corporation of Japan released industrial wastewater into the sea around the city of Minamata. The mercury poisoned the marine food c residents became ill, leading to the discovery of a new neurological condition calle date, more than 1,700 people have died from the disease, which can cause convul paralysis, coma and death.

### Ecocide in Vietnam

The Rainbow Herbicides showered over the jungles of Southeast Asia included Age Orange accounted for more than half of the nearly 20 million gallons of [deadly che military](#) between 1961 and 1971. The cost to human life was horrifying and the lar region's environment led to the coinage of the word "ecocide."

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Nguyen Thi Thanh, 53 and her daughter, Tran Thi Le Huyen, 26, who has spina bi

### Death in Bhopal

In what is considered the world's worst industrial catastrophe, 32 tons of deadly ch  
city of Bhopal, India, on Dec. 3, 1984, and an estimated 9,000 people died immedi  
born poison. The final death toll over the ensuing weeks has been estimated at 20  
thousands of residents suffered permanent injuries. Today, the Union Carbide plan  
remains a toxic waste site contaminating the groundwater in Bhopal.



Mahmuda Bee, a survivor of the Bhopal disaster. (Raj Patidar/Reuters)

#### Catastrophe at Chernobyl

First there was Windscale in 1957, then Three Mile Island in 1979, but when a nuclear power plant in Ukraine had a meltdown in 1986, it became the worst nuclear power plant disaster. The United Nations Chernobyl Forum Report estimated the total number of deaths due to radiation exposure to be 4,000.



A kindergarten in the abandoned town of Pripyat, Ukraine. (Damir Sagolj/Reuters)

#### The oil crisis

Although it is the most infamous oil spill in history, the Exxon Valdez catastrophe of oil into the Prince William Sound of Alaska in 1989 is actually far from the largest spill in 1991, for example, resulted in at least 160 million gallons of oil entering the Exxon Valdez heightened public awareness of the great environmental costs of oil : the Oil Pollution Act in 1990. Tragically, clean-up efforts such as high-pressure was followed Exxon Valdez also had detrimental effects on the once pristine ecosystem



A bird stained with oil after a 2007 spill near Russia. (Alexander Natruskin/Reuters)

#### Dying oceans

When the cod population crashed in the historically abundant waters off of Newfoundland, many people lost their jobs and the effect on the region's marine ecosystem was devastating. From Iceland to Chile are overfished and suffering. The writing on the wall couldn't be clearer: the oceans are being pushed to their ecological limits. And, diminishing populations of fish don't just hurt the fish; they bring the [economies and livelihoods](#) of their human predators down with them.



Wholesale market in Bangladesh. (Andrew Biraj/Reuters)

#### Perfect storm over Lake Victoria

Today, the largest lake in Africa is the center of a perfect storm of environmental crisis: sewage pollution; overfishing; a plague of water hyacinth plants; exploding algae blooms; and a loss of native fauna. Additionally, the lake's border is shrinking by as much as 150 feet in some places. Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania are dependent on Lake Victoria for their livelihoods and are among the worst unfolding environmental disasters.



A highly endangered shoebill. (Reuters)

#### Rape of the Amazon

Twenty percent of the Amazon rainforest has been lost to logging, soy-farming, ca recent decades. The damage to the forest's biodiversity is inestimable and the rele held in the forest's flora could be accelerating global warming. Some experts now I deforestation of the Amazon could be to create [better jobs through sustainable dev](#) people saying the Amazon has to be the sanctuary of humanity and forget that the there," said Brazil's President Luiz Lula da Silva.





The Amazon near Mandaquiri, Brazil. (Paulo Whitaker/Reuters)

Our warming planet

[Jellyfish swarms](#). [Melting glaciers](#). Lakes turned to desert. Spreading disease. The r caused by increased greenhouse gases read like descriptions of the Great Tribulation. climate change conference was held in 1963 and with increasing urgency, scientist ever since, warning us that because of unchecked consumption of fossil fuels, the a critical threshold where we will no longer be able to influence the warming clima



Jellyfish near Majorca, Spain. (Inaki Relanzon/Oceana)

Read about the [animal species](#) most at risk from the Gulf oil spill.

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