

Author



Elin Kelsey, the author of the virtual exhibition, on her porch

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My work intersects conservation biology, environmental communications, and creative non-fiction. I focus on the prevalence of “doom and gloom” environmental narratives; the hopelessness, shame and other emotional issues that arise from them; and their impact on conservation scientists, environmental communicators, [children](#), and the broader quest for public engagement with environmental issues.

I am particularly interested in the capacity for community and ecological resilience that emerges through social networks—human, and other-than-human. While human social networks crowd-source humanitarian responses to crises, fungal networks that trees use to communicate, support faster recovery of forests following disasters. Elephants with stronger social networks have higher breeding successes. Social networks between humpback whales drive humpback population recoveries in the north Pacific, even as the marine environments in which they live grow noisier and more impacted by pollution, shipping and overfishing. For a richer exploration of

Kelsey, Elin. “Beyond ‘Doom and Gloom’.” Letters from the Rachel Carson Center.” Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2016, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6524.

Chapter: Author

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these themes, please watch this video of a [lunchtime colloquium](#) I delivered at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.

Recognition of the emotional impact of fear-based environmental narratives, and their implications for engagement with conservation, biodiversity and sustainability initiatives is gathering momentum in both academic and popular contexts. In May 2014, Elin Kelsey built upon the interest in hope generated through the RCC walking colloquium, by co-hosting a 48-hour workshop in London, England with a small group of conservation biologists, young journalists, environmentalists and designers. Together, they launched an [#OceanOptimism](#) twitter hashtag and encouraged others to share hopeful, marine conservation successes. On World Oceans Day (8 June 2014) the tweets came in thick and fast, going viral to reach over [30 million users](#) in its first year. More than 58 million users were using the #OceanOptimism by the time this virtual exhibit opened in March 2016. See more at www.elinkelseyandcompany.com.

Websites linked in this text:

- <http://sustainablehappiness.ca/sh-extra/fostering-social-and-ecological-resilience-and-hope/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LOfsDmzLc>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23oceanoptimism&src=typd>
- <https://storify.com/ElisabethJane/oceanoptimism-storms-world-ocean-day-2014>
- <http://www.elinkelseyandcompany.com/>

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