SPRINGS

THE RACHEL CARSON CENTER REVIEW

Issue #10 | 2026

July



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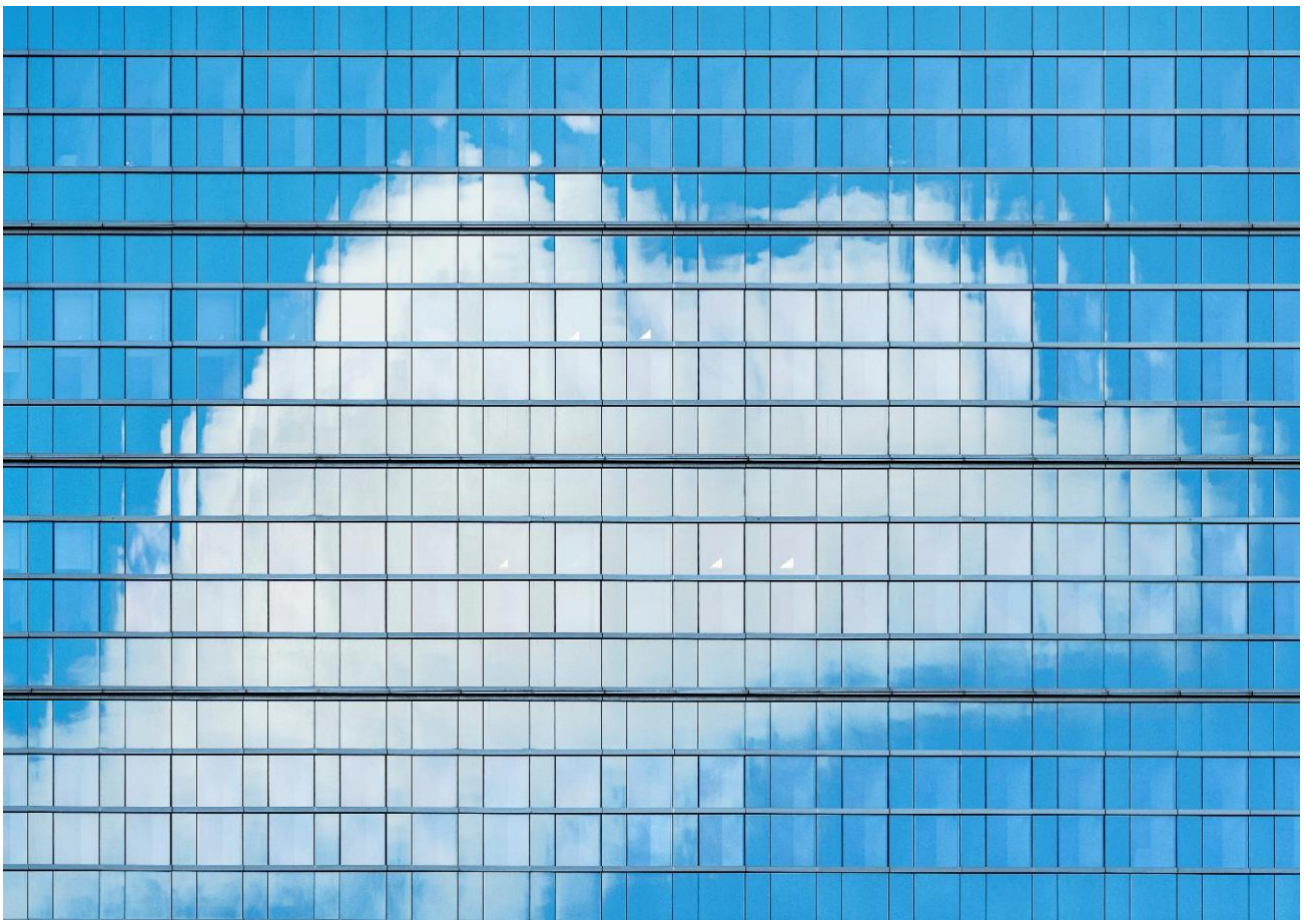
EDITOR'S NOTE: IMAGINING ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURES

Christof Mauch, Pauline Kargruber, and Haley Snyder

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Cars driving, rolling coal. Stories unearthing what was before. Recycled waste reshaping the present. The tenth issue of *Springs: The Rachel Carson Center Review* asks: What is the future of the environment? Participants from around the globe were encouraged to address the question as they interpreted it, with answers rooted in their own experiences and scholarship. Responses ranged from contemplations on cultural practices to deeply personal meditations on health as understood through environmental phenomena, reflections on the past and future of changing landscapes, and evaluations of how accessible environmental humanities scholarship is. Among the contributions are the winning texts of the 2025 "Tell the Untold" writing competition, with illustrations by Jon Gray, Armando Veve, and Alexandra Hochreiter.

As unprecedented conditions require (and inspire) unprecedented imaginations, several authors propose using creative artistic and literary approaches to guide our way through what lies ahead.

Sometimes the link between environmental issues and creative action is a matter of personal expression. In "One Woman's Waste Is Another Woman's Treasure," Regina M. Bichler, a waste and sustainability researcher, interviews the artist Kim Curtis on using environmental struggles and successes as artistic inspiration. Their conversation spans Curtis's multimedia artworks, political strategies for minimizing environmental harms, and the roles that individuals must play in crafting ecological futures.

Expanding on Kim Curtis's argument that individuals must communicate to policymakers what they want, literary scholar Alexa Weik von Mossner's essay, "The Futures We Tell," casts storytelling as a

DOI: 10.5282/rcc-springs-23703

way to effect positive change. Navigating an avalanche of climate change news and related anxiety, the author proposes that future-focused fiction might inspire individuals to act, thereby strengthening political will and support for much-needed environmental policy changes.

Writer Zana Fraillon builds on this idea in "Time After the Hero" when she emphasizes the "mythopoetic power" of narrative and imagination in widening our perspectives to include the nonhuman and temporal realities that persist beyond us. Fraillon proposes a new term for the age we currently find ourselves in: the "Anthropoiescene," which is more of a task than a mere description as it invites us to relish "multiple, contradictory visions of our pasts, and by doing so imagines futures that veer away from one of resource extraction."

In close dialogue with Zana Fraillon, urban environmental humanities scholar Jamie Wang, in the essay "Tell Me a Story, Tell Me the World," extolls storytelling as a relational and ethical practice. In an age where we are saturated with content and consumed by climate injustices, the author explains, it is the thickness of a narrative that ensures both its thoroughness and its stickiness.

The effort to convey complex relationships is put into practice as some of our authors adopt a bird's-eye view, concluding that, in the end, we are unable to escape the crisis but must, in Donna Haraway's words, stay with the trouble.

In "Mapped Futures, Vanishing Places," literary scholar Kumiko Kiuchi portrays the simple act of walking as an opportunity to inherit shared memory. Her writing takes off from Tokyo's artificial waterfront into a creative space stretching from past generations into imagined futures, reminding us to remain "attentive to what cannot be fully possessed or understood."

As if in conversation with Kumiko Kiuchi's text, "Whale Fall" by writer Michaela Vieser engages with movement and the corporeal in a world in which our fates often mirror others'. Her deeply personal essay intertwines the bodily experience of breast cancer with the gentle, gradual quietus of a whale. This meditation on the cycles of life reveals a connection between individual and ecological destinies.

The short story "The Mangrove Doesn't Forget" also explores an emotionally resonant relationship between human and environment. Writer Rachel Desiree Felix draws inspiration from personal and cultural memory to unveil histories of displacement, trauma, and the entanglement of landscape and narrative. Mysterious and atmospheric, the tale takes readers deep into a mangrove forest to a stilted wooden home swollen with river water, tree roots, and remembrance.

Historian Timothy James LeCain is interested in the bridge between humans and materiality. Last year, while driving his SUV home through the mountains of Montana, a large truck pulled in front of him and released a cloud of dense, noxious smoke. Like many cyclists, hybrid car drivers, and "No Kings" protestors, LeCain had been "coal rolled." His tongue-in-cheek essay, "Thank God for the Coal Rollers," explores the practice's culture, intended victims, and even the unintended good it might enact.

Turning their focus to the future of the environmental humanities, this issue's authors push against norms and illuminate neglected, but much-needed, areas of inquiry.

Whether a culture's creation myth begins with a bang or with a crocodile, environmental humanist Kate Rigby's essay, "Ignoring Religion Is Not an Option," reminds readers that religion and its related power structures are foundational to nearly every society. As such, the author argues, they should also be foundational to the study and understanding of the environmental humanities.

In "The Best Is Yet to Come: Latin American Environmental History," historian Claudia Leal surveys the status of environmental history written about and within Latin America. Published mostly in English and often behind a paywall, much of Latin America's scholarship remains out of the hands of its scholars and the public. Only if environmental humanities scholarship is strengthened on a global scale, Leal writes, can the promise of the discipline be realized.

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Echoing Claudia Leal's advocacy for a more inclusive field, historian Rob Gioielli urges us to reconsider how—and to whom—environmental humanists articulate their findings. As we explain and understand the complex web of relationships between human and more-than-human worlds, he writes, we must prevent isolation from the general public and our colleagues in more technical and scientific disciplines. His essay, "The Future of the Environmental Humanities Is Not in the Seminar Room," is a call for engagement and connection outside of the traditional teaching environment.

As our contributors imagine and work toward more ecological futures, so too must the Rachel Carson Center and *Springs* adapt to a period of transition. As new leadership structures are taking shape, the center is well positioned to build on its achievements and will continue to develop its role as a vibrant hub for international environmental humanities research. Yet there is much work to be done. Following the release of issue #10, *Springs* will enter a hiatus. The authors in this issue remind us, however, that this is no time to abandon the work of sharing research, stories, and knowledge. Whatever form that work takes in the years ahead, the conversations fostered by *Springs* will remain an essential part of the Rachel Carson Center's mission.

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Cite this article

Mauch, Christof, Pauline Kargruber, and Haley Snyder. "Editor's Note: Imagining Environmental Futures." *Springs: The Rachel Carson Center Review*, no. 10 (July 2026). https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc-springs-23703.

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ISSN 2751-9317

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