

Note: I was tasked with writing a forward to a WWF photo book that Walter Cronkite had agreed to sign. However, he “rejected” this draft, for the reason explained in a copy of the letter following this text.

Ross/Cronkite Foreword/Draft -01/99:

Posterity best remembers those generations that face and pass grave tests; that forge, in the crucible of adversity, a place for themselves in history by shaping the course of great events. The generation that sired the baby boomers faced that test in World War II while, for the generation that preceded them, it was World War I.

Today, we face an altogether different but in some ways far graver test than the ones our forebears confronted. It is graver because not only the fate of future generations, but that of our very planet--and all that walks, swims, flies or crawls upon it--is at stake.

All around us, the great and intricately patterned tapestry of Life in the natural world is unraveling. It is being burned, bulldozed, plowed under, paved over and consumed at such an incredible pace that Nature herself is showing signs of giving up the fight.

Scientists tell us that what is happening is a crisis of extinction—a biological upheaval that has occurred on a global scale only five times before in the course of all history. Natural cataclysms – colliding asteroids and drastic climate change – triggered such events in the past. But this time the agent of destruction is humanity itself. We are the cataclysm and, knowing this, our test is what we will choose to do about it.

The following pages contain the pictorial odysseys of three gifted photographers who have traveled the globe to show us what is at stake. Their portraits of Nature are taken from the Global 200 – World Wildlife Fund’s list of the places most in need of protection if a representative measure of the biological wealth that we take for granted today is to be preserved for our children to enjoy tomorrow.

In more than half a century as a journalist, my work has taken me from one end of the Earth to the other and I have been fortunate to see some of the places, from the Gulf of California to the High Himalayas, that comprise this most special list called the Global 200. Taken together, they represent an album of Nature in all her poses—from tropical and temperate forests to tundra, mangroves and coral reefs; from the lush jungles of the Amazon to the cacti-studded dunescapes of the Chihuahuan Desert and the ice edge of the Bering Sea.

Few of us will ever visit all of them and most of us may visit none. But that does not diminish the fact that they are part of our living legacy; part of who we are and what we come from; part of what the biologist E.O. Wilson admonishes us to remember is Creation itself. Nor does it relieve us of our responsibility to protect and preserve this legacy for those who come after us. As a father and grandfather, I cannot abide the thought that my children, and their children, will not have at least the opportunity to see what I have been enriched by seeing.

The late naturalist Aldo Leopold once observed that the first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces. Mankind has been tinkering, all too thoughtlessly, with the planet for hundreds of years. It may be too late to save everything in the natural world. But here, in this book, you will find images of some of the most precious pieces that still can and, indeed, must be saved if we are to leave to our children the simple yet eternally wondrous legacy of a living planet.

WALTER CRONKITE
51 West 52 Street
Suite 1934
New York, NY 10019

Phone (212) 975-3627

Fax (212) 975-1509

January 15, 1999

Dear Ms. Dorrance:

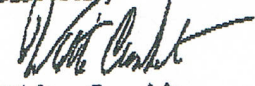
You have presented me with an impossible quandry.

When I agreed to do the foreward for the LIVING PLANET book, I assumed that the draft you would provide would offer some facts and figures around which I could weave my concerns about our environment. Now Michael Ross' beautiful prose has bested anything I could possibly do with the subject.

His offering should stand as the foreward to the book. Without my daring to change a comma in it -- and that I would not do -- I would be guilty of plagiarizing if I put my name to it. I have even resisted ghost written material in matters far less important than the WWW book.

I urge you to use the Ross introduction as it is, with credit where it belongs. It is powerful and convincing and would do WWW proud.

Sincerely,



Walter Cronkite

Post-it® Fax Note	7671	Date	1/15	# of pages	1
To	To Lynn Dorrance	From	Julie Sukman		
Co./Dept.		Co.			
Phone #	202-778-9672	Phone #	212-975-3627		
Fax #	202-293-2239	Fax #			