



## **Ominous Death of Ancient Ones**

Chronicling the man-driven mass die-off of Mother Earth's venerable trees is shocking.

Southern Africa's iconic baobab is known as *The Tree of Life*. Mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and people depend upon these ancient Dr Seuss-like beauties for shade, shelter, food and medicine. It's a brutal environment.

Incidentally, baobab fruit has ten times more vitamin C than an orange, and its leaves and seeds are the backbone of cosmetics and herbal medicines.

From 2005 to 2017, about 22 percent of the oldest and biggest baobabs expired. For a couple thousand years or more, these otherworldly beings contended with one of Mother Earth's hottest climates. Then along came humans with an insatiable demand for

more . . . widgets, plastics, trinkets, concrete, wood pellet and coal furnaces and forever water-poisoning fracking.



Eerie dead baobabs. Image credit: Hougaard Malan

Of the 60 known African giants, eight of the thirteen oldest and five of the six largest have given up the ghost, including the biggest one, Holboom, at 99 feet tall with a 45-foot skirt. A perfect storm of increasing temperatures with longer lasting heatwaves and record nighttime temperatures as well as more extreme variations in seasonal rainfall, parboiled the baobabs. Too hot. Too dry.

“It’s just tragic to imagine that these gorgeous trees have been around for millennia should die,” lamented ecologist David Baum, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Meanwhile on the other side of the world, man-made combustion heat did a deal with the devil and stoked the hideous climate fires of 2020.

On the western face of California’s Sierra Nevada, there are approximately 75 groves of rare giant sequoias, affectionately referred to by some as *Monarchs*. Astonishingly, they are the largest single-stemmed trees on the planet.



You've never really lived until you have marveled and hugged a glorious *Monarch*! Image credit: Jason Halter

These mesmerizing ones extend 275 feet towards heaven's gate and accumulate an astounding 85-foot girth. The *Monarchs* can thrive for more than 3200 years and tolerate surface wildfires, as many as 50 in a fiery century.

Foot and a half thick bark shields them from conflagrations while branches are held high above the ground, mostly escaping ignition. Cones, on the other hand, burst open from the heat of surface fires, seizing the opportunity to germinate on exposed mineral soils. These timeless masterpieces are nature's supreme fire specialists.

The record climate fire season in 2020 was an ecological holocaust globally, more specifically in California where four million acres were incinerated. Perhaps as many as 14 percent, or, almost 11,000 *Monarchs*, over twelve feet in circumference, were burned alive with coke furnace-like heat – head to toe. Unprecedented.

"An initial estimate would be that a few thousand sequoias more than 1000 years old may have died," wept Nate Stephenson, United States Geological Survey.

A mid-August 2020 lightning storm ignited the Caste Fire, which merged with the Shotgun Fire to form the SQF Complex. It turned 174,178 acres of the greatest collection of ancient sequoias on earth into colossal piles of ash.

Wildfire suppression in the Sierra for 100 years, very dry built-up vegetation, including 149 million dead drought-starved and beetle-killed mountain trees and strong winds, collided. Hellfires cremated the giant *Monarchs*.



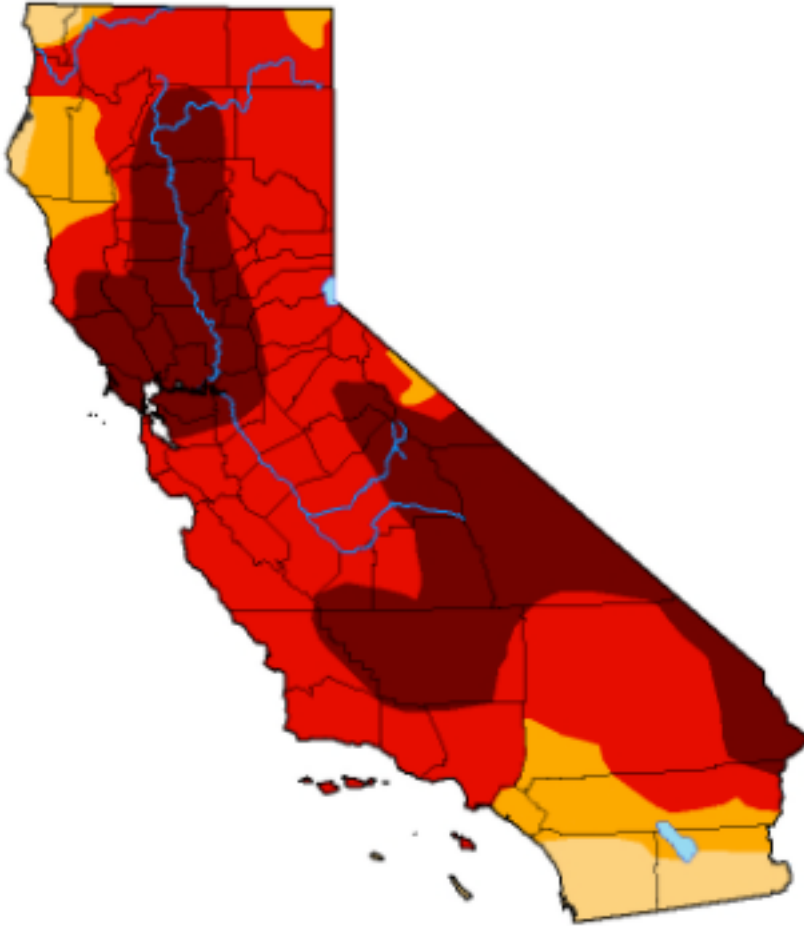
The extreme heat of the Castle Fire was cataclysmic.  
Image credit: Fresno Bee

These unparalleled super-hot climate fires leapt into the *Monarchs* crowns' and burned them in their entirety. The only other such devastating wildfire, evidenced within sequoia tree rings, occurred in the year 1297.

According to Stephenson "the Caste Fire is probably worse than 1297."

The loss of the giants en masse could portend the beginning of runaway ecosystem collapse. No trees. No water. No life.

California's 2020-2021 snowpack was meager and most of the state is now amid severe and exceptional drought. It's tinderbox dry, the big heat and long dry summer has just begun, and the Caste Fire is still smoldering. There will be more ghastly climate fires. Terrifying.



California's drought map, June 2021. Image credit: Univ. Nebraska

We need to decarbonize our civilization as quickly as humanly possible. In May, the UK Met Office predicted that Earth could exceed 1.5C sometime within the next five years. Godawful.

Hence, we demand an immediate end to more coalmines, more fossil fuel pipelines, more derricks tapping into fossil fuel fields under the Amazon rainforest, within Alaska, Russia, Namibia, northeast British Columbia, northwest Western Australia and everywhere else including banning all life-shattering seismic surveys in the oceans. The loss of the giant ones calls our survival in question.

Join the climate strikes and old-growth rainforest blockade in Tasmania with the Bob Brown Foundation. We are playing for all the marbles, there's no wiggle room left.

**Agitate. Disrupt. Defend.**

**#ZeroCombustionEconomy2030**

**#ProtectAllOldGrowthForests**

**#EndFossilFuelSubsidiesNOW**

**#GoVegan**

**#FridaysForFuture**

**#SchoolStrike4Climate**

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