Featured website

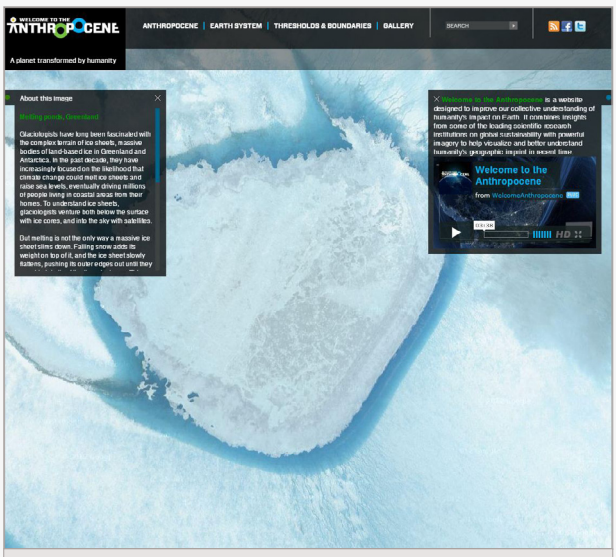
Anthropocene.info

Last summer, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) opened with a stunning and scary animated film showing how humans have impacted our planet over the past 250 years. Welcome to the Anthropocene explains in three minutes how we have entered "a new geological epoch dominated by humanity" and highlights the benefits and dangers of living in such a time.

The global sustainability message of the film is carried on in its accompanying website. Anthropocene.info is an educational tool designed to inform people in more detail about this new epoch in the Earth's history where humans are the main driver of global environmental change. The page's About section states that "[The site's] unique combination of high-level scientific data and powerful imagery will help people visualise and better understand humanity's geographic imprint in recent time" and it does just that.

The high-resolution satellite images, accessible from the Gallery section, are indeed one of the strongest features of the website. In this section, the user can zoom in into various highlighted locations on planet Earth where human-made environmental change is particularly evident. Almería, for example, is the Spanish province with the largest concentration of greenhouses in the world, and the white plastic they are made of reflects so much sunlight into the atmosphere that the region has, in contrast with the rest of the country, cooled down in the past 30 years. Another example is the Arabian Desert, which features circular green crops contrasting their sandy and dry surroundings – an agricultural venture made possible by humans tapping fossil groundwater, a finite resource. Some of the world's megacities and Greenland's melting ponds are also highlighted in this attractive and curious gallery.

But there is much more to Anthropocene.info than powerful imagery. The website includes informative sections on the Anthropocene, the Earth System, and Thresholds & Boundaries, which teach the user about the planet's geological time scale, the Earth's complex interconnected systems, and environmental tipping points, respectively. The Anthropocene page is the most complete, also including instructive material on significant events in humanity's history such as The Dawn of Agriculture and The Industrial Revolution.



Screenshot of the Anthropocene.info website showing Greenland's melting ponds in the background.

The site, a project coordinated by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), is a collaborative effort between scientists from leading research institutions on sustainability and science communicators. At the time of writing, the page was still showing its beta version, with the fully developed site expected soon.

Bárbara Ferreira
EGU Media and Communications Manager and Chief Editor of GeoQ

Featured blogs

The Contemplative Mammoth and The Landslide Blog

What better way to highlight exciting geoscience on the web than featuring some fantastic blogs? In this issue, we're focusing on the The Contemplative Mammoth by ecologist and biogeographer, Jacquelyn Gill and, from the AGU's blogosphere, The Landslide Blog by Dave Petley, a geoscientist at Durham University.

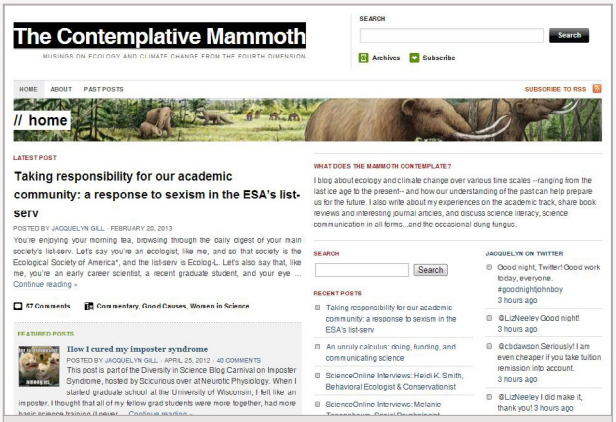
The Contemplative Mammoth – Jacquelyn Gill

Jacquelyn, a doctor of ice-age megaherbivores, plant-climate interactions and extinction, regularly writes about palaeoecology and her experience as an academic scientist.

She is currently completing a post-doc in ecological tipping points and the conservation lessons of Quaternary extinctions at Brown University, so is more qualified than most to blog about this field. Her posts don't stop there though – in fact, Jacquelyn's past posts provide a great resource for any scientist hoping to better communicate their work with the public. From using social media tools to aid academic productivity, to the quirks of scientific debate, and how science online can be used to crowd-fund projects.

Perhaps the best part of her blog is that it is so fantastically personal. So much so, that at the end of each story, you don't even realise that you've been taught the marvels of megafauna, or the dispersal routes of a palaeo-plant, but leave feeling warm and enlightened – or, in my case, stay and repeatedly refresh the screen for the next post!

From interviewing eminent scientists to posting witty and insightful posts on the latest developments in palaeoecology, The Contemplative Mammoth is not one to miss – so start here!



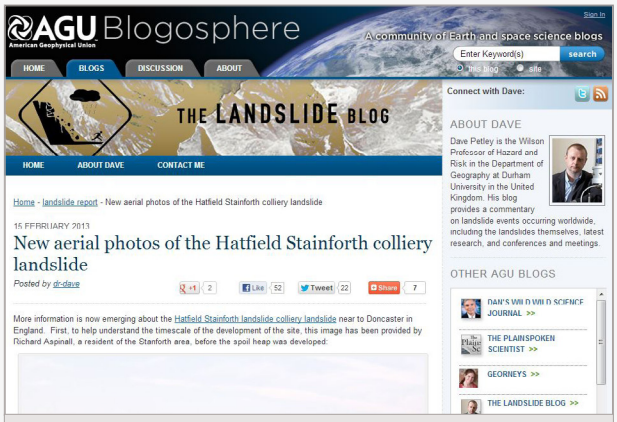
Screenshot of The Contemplative Mammoth frontpage.

The Landside Blog – Dave Petley

Dave Petley is the Wilson Professor of Hazard and Risk in the Department of Geography at Durham University and The Landslide Blog provides readers with regular updates on hazardous landslide events around the world.

Dave's blog is visually stunning, using photographs of landslides and their effects on infrastructure to raise public awareness of landslide dynamics and the hazards associated with them. These images are coupled with informative diagrams and striking footage that enhances public understanding.

The Landslide Blog brings together current landslide events (particularly those that have been picked up in the media) and the science behind them. What reduces the stability of the area? How has this affected the land and why? These are some of the questions Dave tries to answer in his posts.



Screenshot of The Landslide Blog.

Interested in communicating your research to a wider audience? Dave will be talking about how he uses The Landslide Blog to share current research at the EGU General Assembly in the session Blogs and Social Media in Scientific Research. Don't miss it!

Sara Mynott
EGU Communications Officer