

# Stephen Schneider and Global Cooling: An Exchange

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By Robert Bradley Jr. -- September 11, 2022

“The global cooling scare was real from some leading climate scientists and leading environmentalists. And it was promoted in the mainstream media heavily as is well documented. So was the ‘Population Bomb’ (from food shortages) and ‘Peak Oil’/‘Peak Gas’.”

In response to a LinkedIn post on the global cooling scare of the 1970s, one comment was:

It’s a myth that the climate science community was predicting global cooling and an imminent ice age in the 1970s. The media was all over a few proponents of cooling the way they’ve been all over the rare climate science contrarians, so their voices were overamplified, the way the voices of the science denier scientists have been overamplified in the media.

To which I replied:

Stephen Schneider was a leading climate scientist who sounded the cooling scare. Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren too. The ‘big boys’ were leading the alarm.

He replied:

Global warming, not global cooling, was the dominant prediction of climate scientists in the 1970s. global cooling. That paper came out the year he finished his PhD. Five years later, in 1976, he wrote a book called *The Genesis Strategy* that talked about the short term cooling effect of aerosols and the long term warming effect of greenhouse gases. The short term cooling effect of aerosols is an important part of climate science.

Another scientist you are misinformed about is Paul Erlich. He is not a climate scientist, let alone a “big boy” of climate science, so what he predicted wrt global cooling in the ‘70s is irrelevant to what climate scientists were predicting. He is a biologist and he specializes (specialized?) in he dynamics and genetics of insect populations, the evolutionary interactions of plants and herbivores, the behavioral ecology of birds and reef fishes, the effects of crowding on human beings, human cultural evolution and health problems related to industrialization.

From p. 90 of Schneider’s *The Genesis Strategy*:

“I have cited many examples of recent climatic variability and repeated the warnings of several well-known climatologists that a cooling trends has set in—perhaps one akin to the Little Ice Age ....

He stated:

I do not see any evidence that John Holdren predicted global cooling. He co-authored a book that was mostly about population control that has a sentence that says “many observers have speculated that the cooling could be the beginning of a long and persistent trend in that direction.”

In fact, we would be in a cooling cycle right now because solar insolation is in a declining phase, but the huge rise in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to fossil fuel combustion is causing global warming instead. <https://www.co2.earth/>

I responded:

Holdren went from cooling to neutral (offsetting forces) to warming.

The global cooling scare was real from some leading climate scientists and leading environmentalists. And it was promoted in the mainstream media heavily as is well documented. So was the ‘Population Bomb’ (from food shortages) and ‘Peak Oil’/‘Peak Gas’.

Check me on this, but sulfate aerosols have a warming effect via black carbon, or soot, a byproduct. Scientists currently conclude that the net effect is negative—cooling. How much depends on the offset.

He stated:

Sulfate aerosols that originate in part from fossil fuel combustion have a cooling effect — these are the pollutants that were being looked at in the 1970s. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1813951115>

The global cooling scare existed but only because of media attention. Climate scientists of the time were more concerned about global warming. [https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/bams/89/9/2008bams2370\\_1.xml](https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/bams/89/9/2008bams2370_1.xml)

I responded:

I think I have already rebutted this with examples of leading scientists and environmentalists. Remember, climatology was a small, infant profession back in the 1970s, and Schneider was a heavyweight who referred to other climate scientists.

He stated:

The difference is that you named three scientists who predicted global cooling, one of whom was fresh out of school and one of whom was not a climate scientist. That's a combination of two misinformation techniques: cherry picking and fake scientists. I cited a peer-reviewed literature review involving 44 published articles with many climate scientists as authors. Most climate scientists in the 1970s predicted global warming, not cooling.

I responded:

Stephen Schneider in 1976 was Deputy Head, Climate Project at NCAR. He endorsed Lowell Ponte's *'The Cooling'* (1976) on the back cover, where I get Schneider's title from. He was far from "fresh out of school," having spend years as a postdoctoral fellow at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies on climate change issues.

Second, add Reid Bryson to the cooling scare—another very top scientist. These scientists were responding to the global cooling of 1945-75, approximately.

On a 'weighted average' of importance, the Cooling Scare registers big. And when the media hyped cooling (as you admit), where was the backlash from scientists? Was there pushback that global warming was the real threat? This would help your case.

Also note that when James Hansen pronounced the enhanced greenhouse effect in 1988, the climate science community was not on board. This is another story...

I cannot debate all the issues of climate science—or plant biology here. Our back-and-forth is foremost about the global cooling scare. Do you want to continue that discussion?

I think I established that very top scientists led by Stephen Schneider and others were part of a false alarm.

And that was the end of it ....