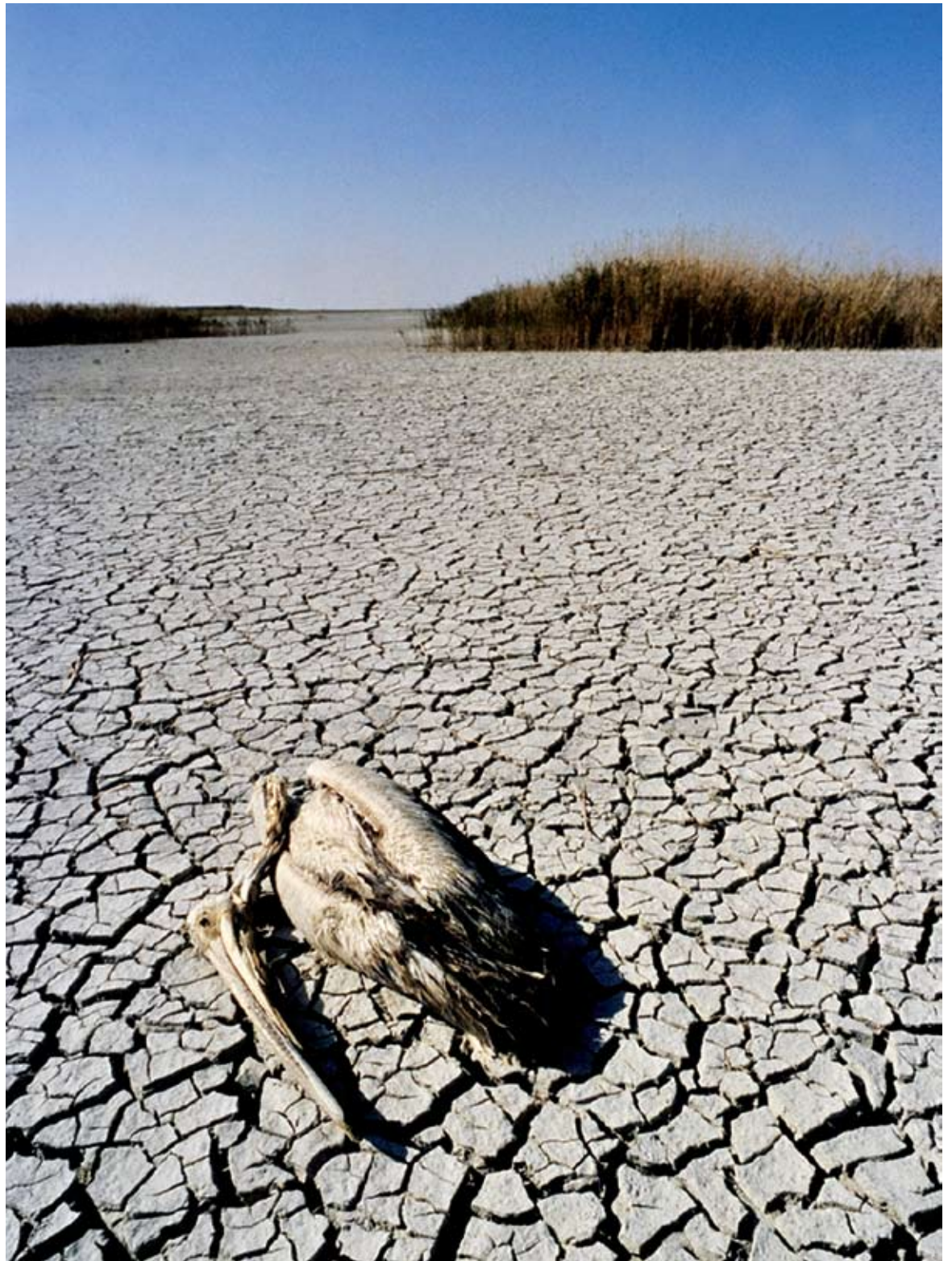


# Before it's too late!

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER AND DOCUMENTARY PRODUCER FATİH ORBAY EXPLAINS HOW RAPIDLY INCREASING CLIMATE CHANGE WILL EFFECT OUR LIFE BASED ON HIS TRAVEL OBSERVATIONS.

We are finalizing our series on “global warming” in our first three bulletins with nature photographer and documentary producer Fatih Orbay’s article on the repercussions of global warming in Turkey. Orbay has visited all corners of Turkey in the last twenty-one years to film nature documentaries, and here, in addition to what has been written about global warming, he reveals the sadly unpleasant scenes he has come across in person. Orbay persistently underlines that we should not remain spectators to this picture and adds that if every single person does not take global warming seriously, it will be too late for everything.





### THE LIVING MUSEUM

Contrary to common views, Turkey is actually a poor country in terms of its water resources. The further decrease in current water resources as a result of climate change related to global warming seriously threatens natural life. The rich flora of Anatolia is greatly damaged due to the improper use of water resources.

I don't remember the number of articles on global warming I have read in the last two years, but I can say it was a fair sum. Each and everyone painted a catastrophic picture and depressed me. On the other hand, there were some who claimed that these reports did not reflect the truth and that there had been similar periods of drought in the history of the world in various parts of the world and that everything had stabilised later and that there was no need to panic.

When two years ago I went to the Black Sea plateaus for shoots and travelled from İspir to Bayburt and then to Çaykara and saw that the green meadows I had grown accustomed to see in the last twenty years had turned yellow, to tell the truth, I had wanted to believe this was a temporary drought.

For twenty-one years I have travelled across all the regions of Turkey with a heavy travel schedule for documentary shoots, clocking up to 50-60 thousand kilometres a year. In this wide temporal perspective, I have unfortunately had the opportunity to personally witness this saddening change. In this year's program, we planned to start in the Northern Aegean Mountains in July, travel south to the Mediterranean and then on to Eastern Anatolia. Our aim was to find

the endemic flower species in the high hills of the Kaz Mountain, Ak Mountain and the Honaz Mountains.

Even the well-watered meadows I knew well on the routes up the mountains had faded, the dried earth had cracked following months of no rain, the small lakes on the plateaus had dried out and many flowers had not blossomed. We had to change our plan for shooting and decided without losing anymore time to find solace on the peaks of the Bolkar (lit. 'Plenty of Snow') Mountains. The average height of the Aegean Mountains where we were disappointed was about 2000 metres. On our way to Ulukışla we stopped by the Ereğli Reeds. The Düden Lake and the Ereğli Reeds where once rare waterfowl would lay eggs and play with their offspring during this season was no different than a desert now. Sad as if we had lost a dear friend, we went to Ulukışla and then on to the Maden village. During the chat we had with the village elders in the village coffee shop we also learned that the Bolkar Mountains didn't have plenty of snow like the past and that the drought was having an impact there as well. The next morning we climbed to the 3.524 m. Medetsiz Peak. We did come across some amazingly beautiful flowers around Medetsiz Hill which relieved our sadness a little and consoled us. Even here, it was impossible

to see the drop in wealth compared to previous years, since I had visited the same sites in previous years. The rocks around the glacier lake would be far snowier, and hills facing the sun would have far more flowers.

We experienced a strange paradox regarding climate change on the Eastern Black Sea plateaus we travelled to following the Bolkars. We chatted with a beekeeper we came across while shooting on the famous Cimil and Anzer plateaus. The beekeeper mentioned an abundance unseen in the last 50-60 years and they had managed to gather an unexpected amount of honey. "We haven't processed the hives yet this year but I have a feeling the yield will be even better than



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According to Fatih Orbay's observations, there are visible signs of the emergence of drought conditions across Turkey. There is a drop in flora variety even in high regions which receive intense precipitation and are covered in snow for most of the year. According to Orbay, the problem we are suffering from cannot be summarized as global warming and should be defined as climate change which can have far graver consequences. We must, first and foremost, realize that this climate change can vitally affect our lives and take the necessary precautions.



the previous year,” he said. Although standard Black Sea honey costs 50 Lira per kilogram, there were two reasons for the centuries-long fame of Anzer honey which is far more expensive. One was the height of the plateau and the other was the variety and wealth the bees collected honey from. Another reason for Anzer honey being so expensive was the short honey season. The beekeeper we chatted to was delighted the honey season had extended for the last two years which had led to a better yield, however he wasn't aware that this was a result of global warming, the biggest trouble the world is facing today.

#### **Disaster isn't that far away**

I don't know what the phrase “plain citizen” means, but I think it means people who don't question much, don't require in-depth knowledge about anything, are unaware of what decision-makers are up

to and obediently go on living in their small and superficial worlds. I think this is how these plain citizens perceive global warming: “What difference does 3 degrees make, we live through not 3 but 33 degrees change from season to season, it will be fine for years to come, do not get depressed, these pessimistic scenarios are nothing but the exaggerations of environmentalists.”

However, estimates based on scientific measurements reveal that at least one million species will become completely extinct by 2050 because of climate change. This is not the only loss, each species which becomes extinct, triggers the destruction of another 15 species within ecological integrity. In other words, when the small shrimp inhabiting Salinas disappear, flamingos, whose main nutrition they form, will be seriously affected as well.

The list of negative consequences which will be brought on by this change of 3 degrees, which is simplified by plain citizens, is quite long, some items on the list being estimates and others already definite. Middle-aged citizens who easily say “après moi le deluge” and add that all these disasters will come after they are gone should know that in a future they will probably see and experience, agriculture will become impossible in many parts of the world and of Turkey because of drought and salt stress. There will be disaster-level crises in the tourism and agriculture industries in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions which will be affected worse by climate change.

In contrast to what some ignorant politicians claim, our country is not “water rich” according to world standards. However, since we are relatively luckier than the countries around us, the pos-



sibility of serious disagreements and in fact, wars with our neighbours over water looms as a real possibility. In the next 100 years, sea levels will rise 60 cm.s because of melting glaciers. Although not on the scale of the Netherlands, there will be serious losses of land along Turkish shores as well. The series of disasters awaiting us is long.

### **What we can do as individuals**

The answer to those who may ask “So we understand all this, but what can we do?” is very clear. We have to first and foremost realize that the problem is not only global warming but a far more serious problem which is climate change, and understand that the consequences of climate change will vitally affect everyone. The environment for the solution of this massive global problem is mostly international platforms, but it cannot be

forgotten that the essence of large-scale social movements is personal awareness. More long-term, sustainable plans based on scientific infrastructure must be developed in energy and water policies across Turkey and these plans must be rigorously inspected. Considering the fact that 70 per cent of our water resources are used in agricultural irrigation, the lack of knowledge in water use stands out and the importance of the need for education can perhaps be better understood. But first and foremost, everyone has to take climate change seriously. Otherwise, it will really be too late for everything.

This is what is inscribed on a headstone in the Black Sea: “I told you I wasn’t well, see now?” We hope we won’t one day receive the same message from the world we live on.

## **Who is Fatih Orbay?**

Born in 1946 in Ankara, Fatih Orbay is a graduate of the Department of Architecture at the Middle Eastern Technical University. Having worked as a presenter at the TRT for a period, Orbay has continued to work as a professional photographer and documentary producer since 1965. Orbay has made it his mission to introduce the natural treasures of Turkey to the people of our country and he has specialized in the field of nature documentaries. The numerous programs, books and exhibitions by Fatih Orbay include “The Lost World” (1988), “Çanakkale/Gelibolu” (1990), “The Firtina Valley” (1993), “A Walk to the Clouds” (1995), “Four Seasons Anatolia” (1996), “Wetlands, The Source of Life” (2000) and “Nature and History in Anatolia” (2004).

### **The Tekfen Foundation and Fatih Orbay**

The relationship between the Tekfen Foundation, which considers the protection of the natural environment as one of its most important aims and nature lover Fatih Orbay began in 2007 with the publication of the book “Anatolian Flowers” with the sponsorship of the Foundation. This precious work which comprised 360 out of tens of thousands of flower photographs taken by Orbay and his team across Turkey and over a period of twenty-one years, received plaudits from a wide audience including first and foremost nature lovers. The documentary “The Unique Flowers of Turkey” the production of which began immediately after the publication of the book, again with the support of the Tekfen Foundation, will focus on Anatolian flowers growing in their natural environment. The project also includes the production of two DVDs designed as a summary of the documentary.

