



Dispatches From The Wild, Weird World Of Humanity And Its Biosphere

June 2 2021

A Body Blow for Big Oil

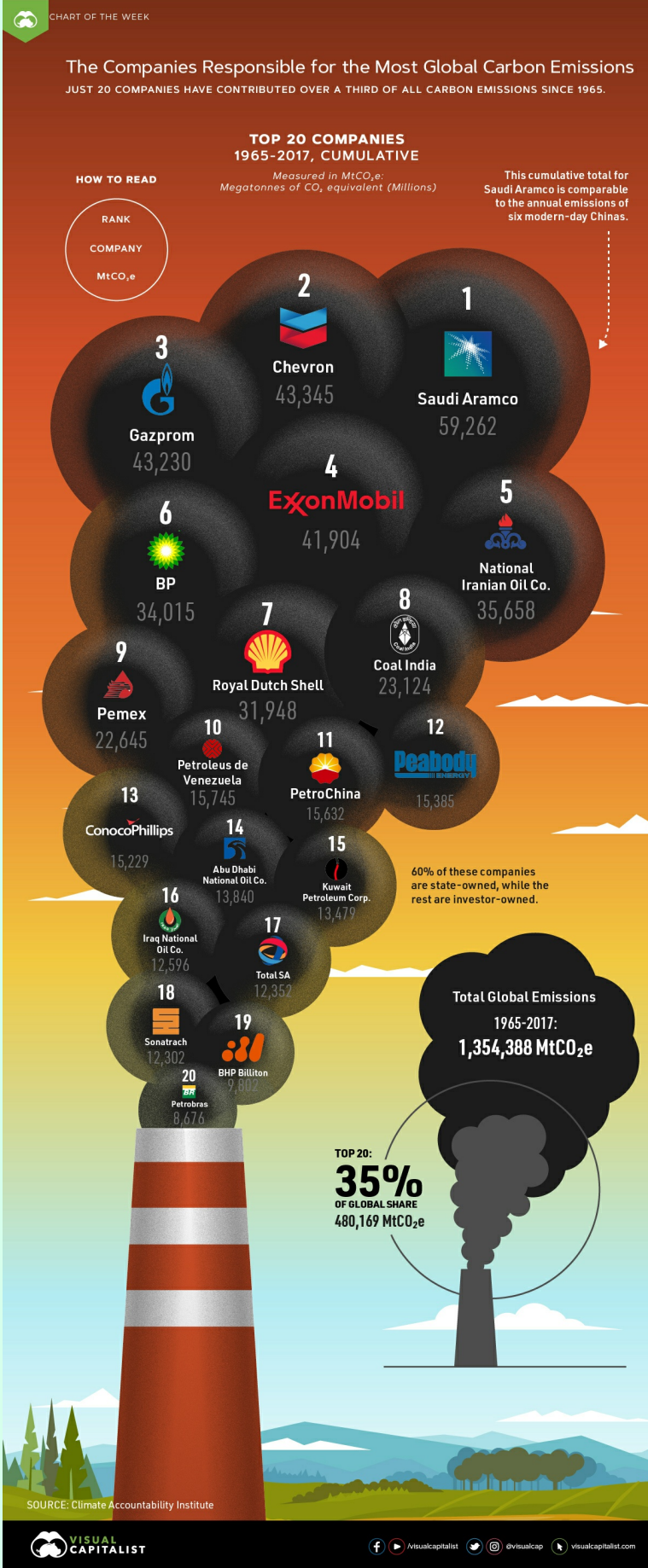
Wednesday, May 26th, 2021, was a day that will live long in the memory of the fight against the climate crisis. In an amazing sign of the times, Chevron, Exxon, and Shell, the second, fourth, and seventh largest corporate contributors [of all human-caused carbon emissions ever](#) (see diagram) all received [powerful body blows intended to force them into reducing their emissions](#).

In the Netherlands, a [Dutch court ordered Shell to cut its Scope 3 emissions](#) (all emissions caused by all the oil it sells, not just the ones directly created by company cars, offices, and so on) by 45% from 2019 in the next ten years, in order to comply with the Paris Agreement. This is the most powerful judicial action on behalf of the climate in history, and will be impossible for Shell (full name Royal Dutch Shell, headquartered in The Hague) to ignore.

Across the pond, [Chevron and Exxon both faced shareholder revolts](#). Major Exxon shareholders voted to replace 2 of Exxon's 12 board of directors members with pro-climate action candidates from Engine No. 1, an activist hedge fund. And at Chevron, 61% of investors voted in favor of a resolution to reduce Chevron's Scope 3 emissions, although specific details and reduction plans are undetermined.

These actions aren't quite a done deal yet, as Shell will appeal the Dutch court's ruling, the two new pro-climate action Exxon board members are likely to be regularly outvoted, and Chevron leadership will likely try to weasel out of emissions reductions as long as they can. But it's still absolutely wonderful news, a major blow to oil companies' reputation and future economic viability, and a massive signal to the world's markets and legal systems that the age of fossil fuels is coming to an end.

“It may be the most cataclysmic day so far for the fossil fuel industry,” [said renowned climate activist Bill McKibben](#). “If you want to keep the temperature low enough that civilisation will survive, you have to keep coal and oil and gas in the ground. That sounded radical a decade ago. Now it sounds like the law.” Spectacular news!





Australia

Last year, conservation group Aussie Ark reintroduced 26 Tasmanian devils (*[Sarcophilus harrisi](#)*) to mainland Australia, restoring the largest living marsupial predator to the lands it has been absent from for millennia. (And, importantly, establishing a population safe from Devil Facial Tumour Disease, [the only known contagious cancer](#)). The Weekly Anthropocene [reported on the reintroduction at the time](#).



Now, in their fence-protected 1000-acre sanctuary in the [Barrington Tops](#) area, [the devils have begun breeding!](#) Aussie Ark scientists found seven Tasmanian devil joeys had been born, and pouch checks confirmed they were all healthy. They are the first Tasmanian devils born on that continent for over 3,000 years. Aussie Ark researchers (one is pictured, holding a Tasmanian devil) estimate that over 10 more joeys may be born this year, and they also plan to reintroduce 20 more adult devils in the next two years. "The devils have not only survived, they've thrived, every single one of them," said Aussie Ark president Tim Faulkner (pictured). "We have watched them establish territories, we've watched interactions, two sisters came back together and started living together, and we have watched them breed." Great news!



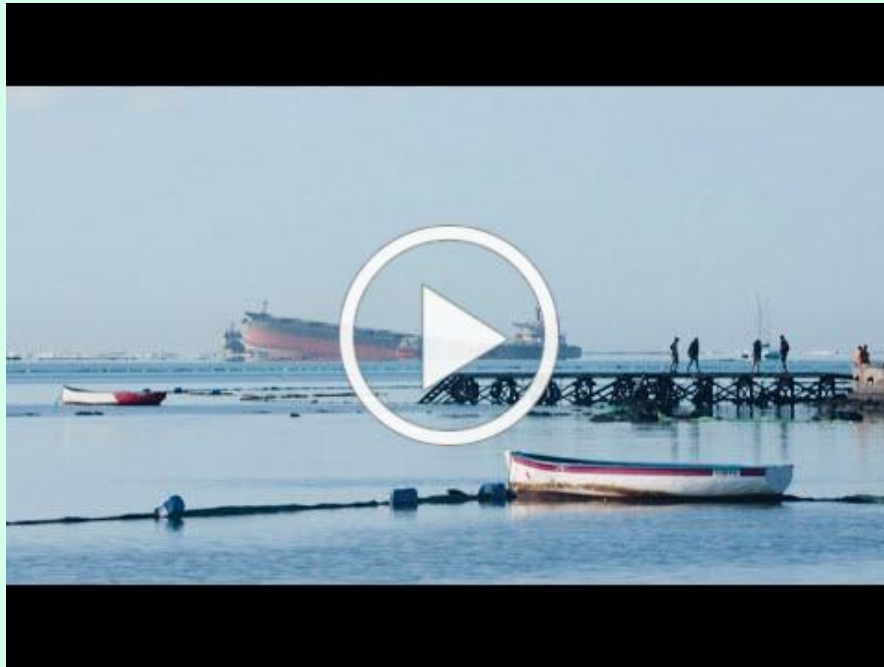
Mauritius and Jersey

In July 2020, the *[MV Wakashio](#)* ran [aground](#) on a coral reef off the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius, spilling over 1,000 gallons of fuel oil into the precious marine, shoreline, mangrove, and marsh ecosystems nearby. The ecological damage was immense, and were it not for the rapid action of a few local conservationists, it might have caused several extinctions. The critically endangered Bojer's skink, and the lesser-known but likely also



extremely imperiled Bouton's skink and lesser night gecko, had much of their species living in small populations on tiny islets off the Mauritius coast that now had oil washing up on them. Wearing gas masks due to the toxic fumes, conservationists from the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust [rescued](#) 30 Bojer's skinks (*[Gongylomorphus bojerii](#)*, the only

species in their genus, one is pictured), 30 lesser night geckos (*Nactus coindemirensis*), and 6 Bouton's skinks (*Cryptoblepharus boutonii*) from the islets. They then ended up keeping the 66 reptiles in a spare room until they managed to convince a sympathetic rich person to loan their private jet to bring the skinks and geckos to the Durrell Trust's world-renowned reptile breeding centers on the unique British [island of Jersey](#).



(Pictured above: a YouTube video summarizing this incredible rescue).

The work has paid off immensely. Now, the 30 Bojer's skinks (which consisted of 15 males and 15 females) have [produced an astonishing 52 baby skinks](#) in the eight months since they were brought to Jersey, while the 30 lesser night geckos have produced 26 young and have a further 23 fertile eggs being incubated. The six Bouton's skinks have yet to produce fertile young, but the Durrell herpetologists are still hopeful, and have long-term plans to establish a stable "ark" population of hundreds of each species. While some of each reptile species fortunately survive on northern islets unaffected by the spill, this captive breeding program is still critical for the species' future genetic diversity—once the landscape is oil-free again, there will be skinks and geckos available to be reintroduced. This is an incredible story of the Anthropocene—when human error and the endlessly destructive fossil fuel industry threatened to devastate unique evolutionary lineages, a dedicated team of conservationists stepped in to save them. Fascinating news!

The Weekly Anthropocene

Email Address:
samuel.matey@maine.edu

**Contact Us
Today**

