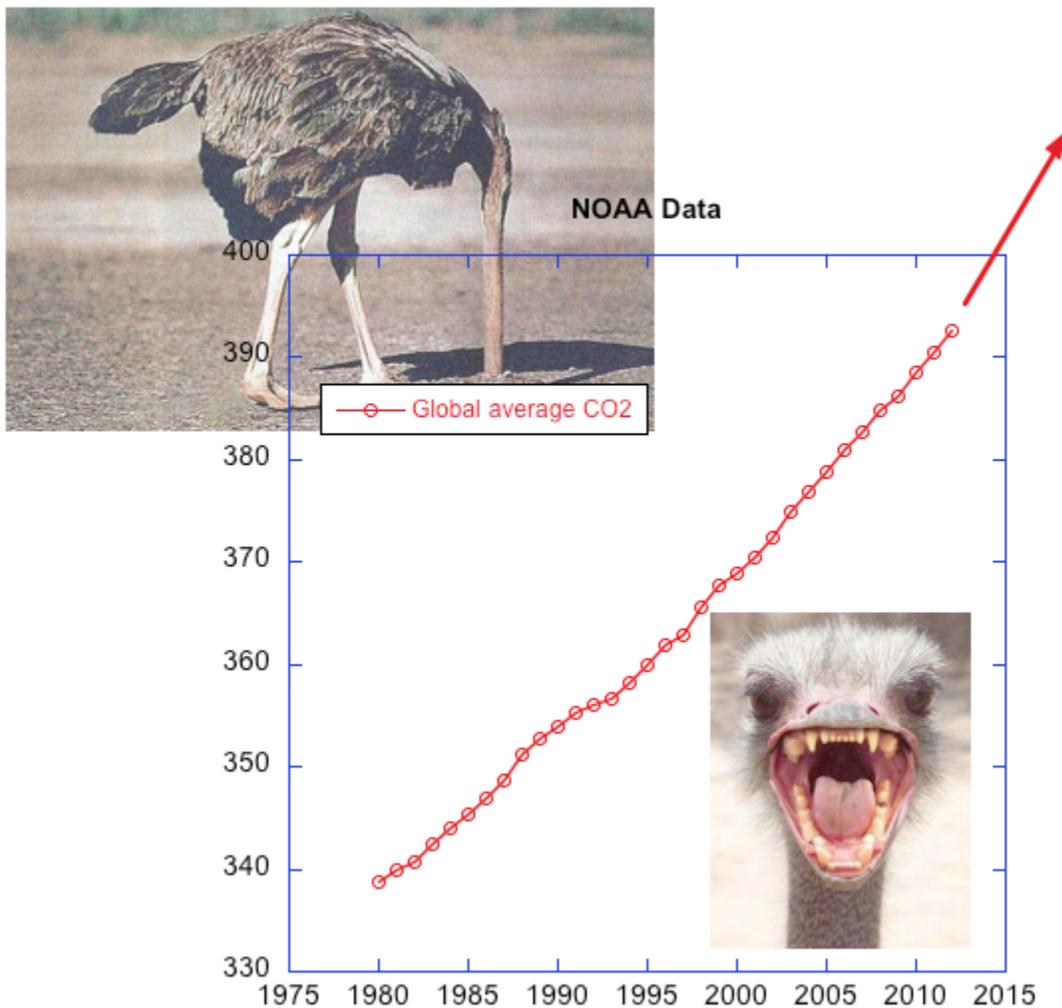


## Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change and Sustainability: Why Ignorance Is Not Bliss

J. White

Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR), University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309;  
303-492-7909, E-mail: James.White@colorado.edu

Climate is changing and human beings are causing it, in large part via emissions of greenhouse gases. While what to do about climate change is a policy matter, purposefully blinding ourselves by cutting back on monitoring programs is willful ignorance and thus a science issue. This talk will begin with the physics of climate change, move on to the highly certain, no-brainer impacts, discuss the role of monitoring systems in informing us about choices for achieving sustainability, and then address the ethical issues at the heart of sustainability as well as the threats to achieving sustainability that accompany willful ignorance.



**Figure 1.** The ostrich has long been a symbol of willful ignorance, stereotypically burying its head in the ground rather than facing real threats. Arguably the greatest threat to humans today, and certainly one of the greatest threats to achieving sustainable societies in the future, is climate change caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gases. The NOAA network opens our eyes to that threat. This talk argues that we should get our heads out of the sand and keep watching the sky.