

Chapter 11 — Can We Save What's Left?

Open to Change, Truly Care, Let's Do This!, Why Should I Care?, Cultural Issues, Government

Open to Change

If the past 50 years of actual experience and complete lack of results has taught us anything, it's that we obviously need to completely change our ways, forever, to save our wildlife, our planet, and humanity. We're going to have to make some tough decisions and some potentially difficult choices at the personal level, along with some sacrifices compared to what we're used to. When I say, "what we're used to," that's exactly what I mean. We're going to have to change, but the changes don't have to be bad, just different. Like moving from Florida to Maine. Life is different, the culture might be different, the go-to stores might be different, the winters are longer and colder, but it doesn't make it bad. Just different. And in many ways, maybe even better. It's all in how we view things. There are pros and cons to everything. Personally, I love the trees, scenery, and wild northern open spaces in Maine. The entire vibe and culture is so much earthier and more natural, and it feels less synthetic compared to Florida. In Maine, the water is pure and clear, and you can drink it right out of the creeks in places, whereas in Florida the water is completely undrinkable and must be hauled in or filtered. Yet Florida is warm in winter for those pansies among us.

"The definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results." Albert Einstein

Truly Care

In order to make the kinds of big changes that are so desperately needed, we need to care deeply about the issues that underlie the needed changes. Big changes are usually not convenient, and they typically require quite a bit of planning and extra work. For example, making a big move to another home or state or even another country isn't easy, and it takes a lot of commitment and work to do it. But it's doable.

I truly care about our planet and our wildlife and have been making changes gradually over the past few decades to reduce my carbon footprint and, by extension, my impact on wildlife. Back when I started, I cared because I saw the crisis coming and wanted to do all I could to mitigate my personal impact. I even changed careers and left the oilfield service company that my father founded, and took a pay cut to do so. All these years I have done my best to influence others to do the same, and I have been fascinated by the avoidance of the truth and the resistance to change. I have been asked more than once to stand down, through body language or rolled eyes or just someone that I'm talking to walking away or changing the subject.

It seems to me like everybody is walking around like zombies, focusing on nitpicky things that are not nearly as important as saving our planet. Like they had to park 500 feet from the entrance to the Costco because all the nearby spots were taken by the other big corp loser shoppers, or the store stopped discounting the pop, or they ran out of bottled water OMG. The reality about how bad it really is for truly important things, like our entire freaking planet and the entire web of life that every single one of us, big corp shopper and hippie alike, absolutely can't survive without, just doesn't seem to drive much urgency. My guess is that this is driven by the influence of big corp, which wants us to keep cranking away on irresponsible purchases until everything is spent. Think about that. On TV, how many of the advertisements are for junk we don't really need or that is bad for our health? How many are for actions that we can make that would actually help the planet and wildlife, or at least bring attention to the problems?

To truly care, we have to understand the actual emergency crisis that our planet is in, and we have to be literally horrified. I can tell you I am. We're down to less than 10 years before our carbon emissions are going to push our planet past a tipping point from which we're not going to be able to return. If we allow this to happen when we have the knowledge and we don't really have to do very much to reverse this would be absolutely absurd. Just beyond idiocracy. I have no idea why some people wake up to this extremely serious problem that should be an absolute priority for everyone on the planet, while most just don't. I simply ask you to care now, if you don't already. PLEASE PLEASE **PLEASE** care enough to

"How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," Climate activist Greta Thunberg speaking to world leaders at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit in New York.

change. We can't undo the past, but we can change the future. We have all contributed to the decimation of our wildlife, and we all have the ability to help it recover, for the sake of our planet.

In 2015, Paul Ehrlich, president of the Center for Conservation Biology at Stanford University, coauthored a paper in *Science Advances* that established, using very conservative assumptions, that the sixth mass extinction has officially arrived. This means we are likely at the dawning of a truly sad era in which 75% of species will perish from the Earth. Ehrlich likens saving of species through cloning, like they're trying to do with the black-footed ferret, to anticipating a flood and planning to bail with a thimble. He would prefer to see the immense resources of a \$561 million not-for-profit organization like the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance go toward addressing the root causes of the conservation crisis, such as population growth and climate change. "Screwing around with science to save a white rhino might be fun, and I would like to see it preserved and am all for biodiversity, but it's so far down the list of things we should be doing first," Ehrlich said.

Let's Do This!

Chapters 7–10 have many recurring themes about what is contributing to wildlife destruction, and each and every one of us can make a huge difference, especially if all of us do something about it and not just a few of us. We all live on planet Earth, and we all have a stake in this. Inaction and complacency should be socially unacceptable and have no place in saving our planet. We can't ignore this situation any longer.

You can always donate your ass off. Save those whales! Save the pandas! Save the penguins. The monarch butterfly. The great apes. The Tasmanian devil. It will probably make you feel a little better for a little while, and it might help a little bit for a little while, but at the end of the day the only true way of saving our wildlife is to drastically cut our carbon footprint, reduce human population, and give the wildlife their space and leave them alone.

1. **Global warming**—Our CO₂ emissions from the use of fossil fuels is a huge driver of wildlife loss, and if there's anything we can each do immediately, it's cut our carbon footprint. We need to cut by at least 50% by 2030 globally in order to stay within the temperature limit determined through intensive scientific analysis to avoid hitting a global warming tipping point, from which there is no return. Global warming is the biggest issue we have by far. If we don't get this right, the other efforts won't save us. Even though population growth is at the bottom of everything, to address the emergency we find ourselves in it will take more time to reduce our population compared to immediate reductions in carbon footprints.

By the way, in developed countries like the U.S., where we're using even more carbon per capita, about 4 times the global average, we need to cut our carbon footprint by even more. By a lot. More like 80% of current use. And, again, it's not that hard. A lot of our usage is simply waste that we need to be conscious about. For more ideas on how to do that, and to see how my husband and I have already nearly done it, refer to Section 5 on reducing carbon footprint per capita.

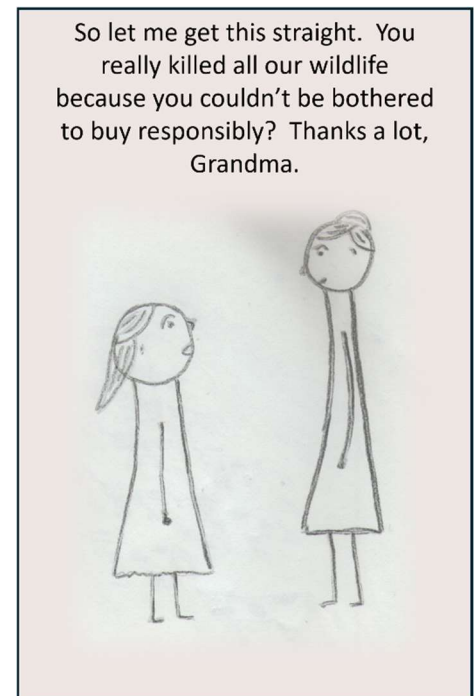
Get off the internet and go outside and take a walk. The data centers are currently 2% of our electricity, and the lion's share of this by far is gaming. Phantom energy alone is 8% of our electricity. That's just energy for appliances that are on but that we're not even using. What a waste! Don't leave bathroom fans running for more than a few minutes. Lower indoor lights and put outdoor night lights on motion sensors. If you're heating or cooling your air, keep the windows and doors shut. Don't buy junk you don't need; there's a footprint associated with everything. Do you really need that new outfit? Textiles are one of our biggest sources of waste. The best way to buy clothes these days is from thrift stores. You pay a lot less and there's no additional carbon footprint in producing it.

My father, who was always supportive of my efforts to reduce my footprint, said that all we need to do is live like they did in the olden days, when he was growing up. He was born in 1928, when global population was a mere 2 billion, predating the severe decline in wildlife that followed in the many decades to come. Bottles were always reused and single-use plastic wasn't a thing yet. You didn't waste anything during the depression. Big corp hadn't yet conned humanity into believing that bottled water was better than tap water, and most food other than the rare import was local. You took your own boxes to the grocers, and most things were refilled or made from scratch. Fast food wasn't a thing at all, you sat down in a diner and ate from porcelain plates with metal utensils, and drank from porcelain cups or glasses. None of those nasty little ketchup packets in the olden days!

Get over buying the biggest house you can afford to hell and gone, then driving an hour each way to get to work. That's just stupid. You're paying more for gas and for heating and cooling the house, plus all that frustrating tedious time sitting behind the wheel. It's so much healthier with a lower footprint to live a reasonable distance from where you work and in a smaller home. And don't buy stupid useless nonsensical junk like snow blowers and leaf blowers, loud obnoxious machines that fill the world with noise; try a shovel or a rake or a broom.

Embark on a serious and focused path to reduce your individual impact on this planet. It's not hard. It just takes some thoughtful and relatively minor changes in behavior and, yes, possibly a few sacrifices. But, isn't our planet and other life forms worth it? The good news is that you'll probably save a lot of money while sticking it to big corp at the same time. How does that sound for a win-win? Think about how much better you'll feel!

2. **Human population growth** must stop, and we must begin to reduce it. Lower human population means less land needed for food, natural resources, construction, and pretty much everything else we consume from our Earth and take from wildlife. By extension this will reduce the carbon emissions that are causing global warming. If we continue on our current path, we will run out of our natural resources, decimate our wildlife and lead to our own misery and extinction in the process. As shown in Figure 1 in Chapter 4, we will continue to decrease wildlife population if we continue to increase human population. And we're less than a decade out from complete decimation.
3. **Only buy organic food.** Every time I mention organic, people say they can't afford it. Well, the problem is that we can't afford not to. We've backed ourselves into a corner when we can't afford to feed ourselves without poisoning the environment, and the other life, as well as humans, who live here. The planet and wildlife can't afford continued toxic agriculture.
4. **Make responsible grocery choices** since this is our biggest daily consumption. After all, we have to eat, don't we? Buy local groceries that don't consume energy in transportation and are produced responsibly, with as little processing and packaging as possible. In summer, shop at the local farmer's market. When we consume highly processed food, not only is more energy used to produce it and package it, it is stripped down of nutrients that we actually need, is not good for us, and consumes more land in its production. Examples are beef, dairy, and anything with refined sugar in it, which consumes enormous amounts of land, corn, and other grains for feed and is overconsumed by Americans, leading to health problems that in turn lead to an even higher carbon footprint. Basically we are killing wildlife and our planet as we trash our bodies with lousy diets. Seriously.
5. **Say no to toxins**—Most of these are petrochemicals that pollute the environment in their production and in their final use, after which they typically go down the drain to the local wastewater treatment plant and from there, either untreated or partially treated, to the nearest receiving water body. Once there, they poison the aquatic and terrestrial wildlife that depends on that water to survive. Are you fine with letting your child drink this muck? Your dog? Then why would you be fine with letting the wildlife drink and swim in it?



These toxins are mainly found in commercial personal care and home cleaning products. Tide is one of the worst. Not only do they not have the guts to even show their ingredient list on their labels, they have them buried so deep on the internet that no mere mortal can ever find them. Luckily I'm not just any mere mortal. I'm a crazy environmental OCD mortal. That lovely special "Tide" scent? A propriety concoction of nasty petrochemicals that don't biodegrade in the environment and that are lethal to aquatic wildlife at extremely low concentrations. Given that most of us use this kind of rot to clean our dirty laundry, it's no wonder we have so little wildlife left. By the way, that lovely propriety scent has absolutely nothing to do with how clean the clothes get. Neither do the synthetic dyes, also petrochemicals, that big corp likes to add to make their product more special than the next. These practices that we're used to are killing our planet, and they're completely unnecessary. Talk about low-hanging fruit.

And think about this: if you can smell that addictive propriety smell that big corp has taught you to love, made with synthetic toxins that kill wildlife in such low concentrations, by definition it's entering your body too, through your nose. Like duh. It's making its way deep into your lungs, from where it enters your blood through fine capillaries, and from there, who knows where it settles. Sound scary? It should. As a faithful consumer of this wonderful product, you're poisoning yourself too. And you deserve it, if you keep using it, now that you know. I hope you're not letting your children smell it. Think about that. Think about how wonderful the Tide commercials make it look to just breathe in those toxins. This is a great example of corporate brainwashing.

6. **Avoid single-use containers**, especially plastic, and for crie sake don't litter. If you just couldn't live without that toxic Coke in a plastic bottle, then you can damn well at least bother to recycle it. If I had a nickel for every plastic bottle I find tossed on the roadsides, I'd be rich. And half the time the loser who bought it didn't even bother to drink it all. If that isn't the height of blatantly irresponsible consumption, I don't know what is.

7. **Reserve 50% of oceans** for wildlife and stop eating seafood. This would let their populations recover, which actually shouldn't take very long. Personally, I'm avoiding ocean fish for the most part. I Google to see if it's endangered, and if so, I won't do it. And every time I check, it's endangered. As much as I love salmon and crab and cod fish. I eat it maybe once per year at most for a privilege that I probably don't deserve. What little fish I eat is freshwater or farmed. What if we all did that? If an additional 37% of the oceans were conserved as marine protected areas (MPAs), as described in the side box, I might even be able to consume some damn fish and chips once in a while, with a relatively clear conscience to boot! And so could you.

8. **Reserve 50% of land for wildlife**. President Biden committed to 30% in 2021 when he assumed the presidency, aligning with the global 30x30 initiative to protect 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030. This level of protection was agreed upon at the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 in Montreal in 2016. The initiative is also known as the Paris Agreement for Biodiversity. Given that the new backwards administration that caters to big corp will probably rescind that commitment, yet another illustration of why we can't count on the government, it would

"In wildness is the preservation of the world."
Henry David Thoreau

behoove us to go for more than we're going to get ultimately, to make sure we give back a minimum. Currently we still have a long way to go to meet that goal,

with a deadline of only four years from now. Well-intentioned nonprofits and laws like the Endangered Species Act are very nice, and help a little, but to really turn things around we absolutely must give wildlife their space. This is a necessary sacrifice that we will absolutely have to make. In the U.S., most of it will be in the West where large areas of land are getting decimated by cattle when only 2% of the beef in the U.S. comes from that public land. The land is far more valuable to wildlife and the planet than it is to the beefeaters among us.

My sister was the ultimate good Samaritan and used to regularly pick up hitchhikers, most of whom were just nice people who needed a ride. Once, she and her husband picked up a hitchhiker in a mountain town who had a bag of McDonald's take-out. He sat in the back seat and proceeded to eat his lunch as her husband drove. When he was done, he rolled down the window and tossed the bag out. Her husband immediately stopped the car and kicked him out, leaving him alone on a remote mountain road to find another ride. No tolerance for littering in that car! Good for them!

Benefits of marine protected areas (MPAs)

- **Protect biodiversity** by reducing human impacts on marine ecosystems and helping restore biodiversity. Achieving 90% of ocean conservation goals would require strategically placed MPAs covering 43% of countries' 200-mile coastal exclusive economic zones and 5% of the high seas.
- **Secure carbon**—The total amount of carbon stored in the top 3.3 feet of seafloor sediment is more than twice the amount stored in the top 3.3 feet of soils on land. Fishing trawlers dragging over the bottom can release this carbon. 90% of the carbon at risk would be secured by protecting just 4.5% of the ocean.
- **Replenish fisheries**—MPAs help increase fish stocks beyond their boundaries. If MPAs covered 23% of the ocean, it could lead to an increase of about 11 million metric tons of catchable fish relative to the way fisheries are managed now. Protecting the right 5.2% of the ocean could yield 90% of that additional catch.

Giving back western land eliminates the need for Wildlife Services and their murderous agenda, and relocates ranchers that are freeloading on the American public by grazing cattle on public lands. Why should we lose the carbon sinks of our western lands and all its wildlife so a few ranchers can live the life they love? We're all going to lose the life we love if they don't change. Is that fair?

9. **Vote for the planet.** Sage grouse habitat is open to drilling in the Trump administration, yet another example of how unpredictable government regimes can be, and why we need to depend on our own collective choices, because in the end our choices are what drive change. If we don't want yet more species driven to extinction, driving our diversity on this planet ever downward, we need to use less fossil fuels; we also need to vote for representatives that represent the actual needs of the people and environmental interests of this planet and not just a few greedy big corp and oil executives who funded their campaigns.
10. **Keep beef and dairy to less than 5%** in your diet. This isn't that hard, saves a ton of money in groceries, and is healthier by a long shot than the astronomic portions we consume now. This would make a huge difference in land and CO₂ emissions as well as in your quality of life, especially as you age. You'll be a lot less likely to need expensive big pharm, last-minute, save-the-day drugs to keep you alive just a little bit longer as you wither away in pathetic misery, all because you ate too much beef and dairy. And helped kill off our wildlife at the same time. Think about that.
11. **Don't buy exotic animal products** like animals killed for their shells, tusks, and pelts. Don't buy anything made with ivory, tortoise shells, coral, reptile skins, or pelts. Don't buy products that are harvested from the wild, like exotic food, medicine, and other products. Seriously, do we really need that ivory carving to be happy in life? What are we going to do with it anyway? Set it on a shelf somewhere? Covet it like some weirdo every day? Show it off? Really? Think about that every time you consider buying a body part from a murdered wild animal.
12. **Create a native garden.** If you happen to live in a house with a flat green lawn, lose it. Even if you live in an apartment or multifamily home, push to get rid of any lawns. Native grasses and landscapes are so much more beautiful and welcoming to wildlife. There are several good books and DIY kits out there to get you started. Native yards give land back to wildlife, and if we all did it, it would make a huge difference, particularly for insects and birds that need natives to survive. Think about it. With natives there's no reason to ever apply poisons, and no time and energy wasted with lawnmowers, so there's also one less noisy industrial machine in the world. You also get some time back in your life. Don't you have anything better to do than waste time mowing the lawn? What a joke.

If you have a flat green lawn and live in the arid West, definitely lose it. There's not enough water in the West to support a bunch of needy lawns. Native insects and wildlife can't live there, because there's no shelter or food for them, and lawnmowers run over them. Lawns are the most unnatural and useless landscape there is. If you have a lawn, how much time do you actually spend in it, or even looking at it? Other than mowing and watering and poisoning it? Think about that.

13. **Don't harass wildlife.** If you have pets that are predatory, like dogs and cats, take steps to prevent them from harassing wildlife. Dogs should be leashed or contained so they don't harass wildlife at home, in open spaces or particularly in the woods. Cat owners should take measures to prevent cats from taking birds, like collars with bells to warn birds, or blocking access to nesting sites. If endangered species are known to exist in an area, pets should be kept indoors or in caged areas out of doors. We can also restrict our pets' outdoor time to seasons when birds aren't present, like winter or when we can be outside with them, to keep an eye on things. We have a neighbor who built a cat cage next to the house with a cat door access, a large outdoor space where the cats can go hang out outside.

Never go off-road in vehicles of any kind—motorized or bicycles. A lot of wildlife nests on the ground. Snowmobiles harass wildlife, causing them to lose energy they need to get through the winter as they seek to escape the noise.

Don't kill wildlife just because it may be annoying. If wildlife is going for the garden and outdoor plants, find a way to keep them off without poisoning or killing them. Mesh usually works just fine. Remember, they were there first, and the mere presence of your yard and garden takes away from their space, leaving them little choice.

Light pollution. Turn off the lights at night, with few exceptions. Seriously, some light is obviously needed for safety, but look at the lights in high rises and other public buildings, originally intended to mitigate crime, or at least make intrusions more noticeable to law enforcement from the street. Is it really necessary to have lights on all night long? Can't we use motion detection for that? Wouldn't it make more sense to have all lights off unless a motion sensor triggers the lights? Wouldn't it be easier for law enforcement to see that there's an intruder?

Noise. Be considerate and keep the noise down when out in open spaces where wildlife live. Ski area avalanche bombing can't be great for those hibernating or awake in winter.

14. **Get Outside.** Take a walk. It's good for us, and it helps to make us care about the wildlife and get to know our local wildlife better. Time spent outside is that much less time we're sitting indoors on the internet sucking energy out of data centers and adding to carbon emissions in the process. Stay on paths, whether hiking, biking, snowshoeing, or skiing. Many forms of wildlife nest and burrow on or below the ground, and they don't need us tromping through their homes and disturbing them any more than necessary.

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything a little better."

Albert Einstein

Why Should I Care?

It saddens me to know that we humans care so little about the other life on this planet that we can destroy as much wildlife as we have, in so many destructive ways. And, to be clear, I'm not against hunting or fishing, and I'm not a vegetarian. The reality is that we live in a dog-eat-dog world, and the entire web of life is a predator-prey world. We humans are a part of this world, and as the top predator, so to speak, we need to eat, too. We technically fall into the category of omnivores, consumers of plants and meat. All I'm saying is that it feels like we should have a responsibility from our position of power to allow the other life to coexist alongside us, and not to abuse our responsibility as an extremely successful species, to dominate the other life and drive it to extinction.

I'm not sure why I and other like-minded folks care so much more than others. We all have access to the same news and information in this age of split-second global internet, but for some reason the news of wildlife decimation doesn't seem to spark urgency in very many of us. Which is pathetic, and we had better change our collective attitude very quickly if we want to save the web of life, of which we are an intricate part. Greta Thunberg and I can't do it alone. Even if we include Greta's million followers and my 393 followers. We all have to change our ways, so how do we seriously care enough to bother? What can I say?

If I say "Worldwide, more than 35,500 plant and animal species are on the verge of disappearing forever," does that help? If I say, these beasts are our family, does that help?

The Indian tiger is on its last leg, and India spent more than \$49 million to try and save it in 2019. Now how is that going to work with India's extremely high population density, when starving people are competing with it for food? Wouldn't that same money be better spent feeding the starving, providing birth control to help women control their family sizes, and creating a refuge for wildlife in half of India? Would that make more sense for wildlife and for humans than dumping a bunch of money and resources into saving one species at a time, rather than addressing the big underlying issues that are the real problem? They might want to also consider outlawing the use of toxic chemicals, at least in agriculture, if they really want to help the tiger, so that its prey might

"We learned in science class that humans share genes with all living organisms on Earth, and that our fates are intertwined. Humans depend on nature, physiologically and, spiritually. HCN (*High Country News*) was originally created in response to that insight, call it conservation, or practicing restraint: the idea that physical spaces and their nonhuman inhabitants need safeguarding, so that our love and appetites don't spoil it for others, whether those here in the present moment or those still to come."
Jennifer Sahn, Editor, High Country News

survive to adulthood without dying or becoming sterile from the poisoning, and poisoning the tigers when they dare to eat.

The point is that we seem to have fallen down a path where certain animals are more popular than others, so they get all the love, when the truth is that individual species are only a tiny part of the web of life, and we need the annoying, ugly little insects, spiders, and snakes too. At least, that's what it looks like to me. I speak from experience. It kind of reminds me of high school, where the popular jocks and cheerleaders got all the love, and the nerds got ignored and ostracized. Till later in life. By the way, I was a nerd. Still am. Who knew?

The way we humans think assumes that we're the smartest and the best; whatever race we are, we're smarter than the other races, other nationalities are somehow less complex than our own, and therefore any problems or concerns they have can be dismissed, and it's OK to oppress them. For my part, I'm much smarter than pretty much all men. Trust me. I'm always right. So you might want to take this seriously. Thought Hilary might beg to differ. Back to wildlife, just because they can't express themselves in the same way as we do, doesn't mean that we should blow them off.

To get through this crisis as a global unit, we don't need to be like obnoxious, aggressive bullies who don't care about anybody but ourselves and don't mind pushing others out of the way for our own private instant gratification. We need to think of other life as worth saving for their own sake and get over our typical anthropogenic attitude that species aren't worth saving if we can't use them in some way. If we've learned nothing else, I hope we've learned that every species has an important role to play in the intricate web of life, and just because we may not know what it is, doesn't mean it doesn't matter. It all matters. We'd better get our heads around that. We're not gods, and it's not on us to decide what life gets to live and what life doesn't matter. The Earth and nature know a lot more about the intricate web of life than we will ever know, no matter how much science we throw at it. And once that web is broken apart, we will never be able to fix it.

It turns out that different species even help and protect each other in the wild. Scientists are discovering that different animals understand each other's habits and warning calls to know where to find food or if threats or predators are around. They even hunt together. Did you see that YouTube video with the fox and the badger hunting together that went viral? If not, google it. It's absolutely amazing. They planned the hunt ahead of time, and cooperated specifically to get it done. If that gets captured on a field video, imagine what else is going on out there. Think about that. It's like the children's books have it right after all. As for the rest of us, how can we assume that other species don't rely on each other and understand their neighbors to survive? How can we think that each individual species lives in a silo? Who do we think we are?

The indigenous Acoma Pueblo set a great example for the rest of us to follow. A member who was talking about the sacredness of the springs they rely on for water mentioned that sometimes when the springs don't have enough water, they'll leave some for the other life forms, so they can get what they need. Now how's that for being a good neighbor?

And then there are the entitled hunters who can't be bothered to use copper bullets, because they are more expensive than lead. Again, I don't mean all hunters, just the scummy ones. Many hunters have switched to copper, because it's the right thing to do. And let's face it, the right thing is always more expensive, but if we don't do it, we're going to lose our world. We've been getting off cheap for way too long, at the expense of wildlife and the planet. Enough hunters still use lead that they are continuing to kill eagles, ospreys, vultures, falcons, and other avian and terrestrial predators that feed on carcasses killed by their lead bullets.

These small-minded losers even risk their own health and that of their families because, ultimately, they'll eat the tainted meat. So, how stubborn and cheap is that? I guess there's a faction of humans who will never change no matter how much common sense it makes to do so. Honestly I think that hunters who can't get over lead shouldn't be issued hunting licenses because they've chosen to be part of the problem and don't deserve the privilege. In this day of overpopulation and associated restrictions and

"We are a wild species, as Darwin pointed out. Nobody ever tamed or domesticated or scientifically bred us. But for at least three millennia we have been engaged in a cumulative and ambitious race to modify and gain control of our environment, and in the process we have come close to domesticating ourselves. Not many people are likely, anymore, to look upon what we call 'progress' as an unmixed blessing. Just as surely as it has brought us increased comfort, and more material goods, it has brought us spiritual losses, and it threatens now to become the Frankenstein that will destroy us. One means of sanity is to retain a hold on the natural world, to remain, insofar as we can, good animals."

Wallace Stegner, Letter, 1960 (reference is Voices for the Wilderness, Sierra Club, William Schwarz, Editor, Ballantine Books, New York, New York, 1970, p284.)

quotas everywhere we turn, including caps on hunting licenses, hunting should be viewed as a privilege and not a right. “If you want to hunt, you’re just gonna have to use copper.”

When we practically exterminated the buffalo to get rid of the Native Americans so we could grab their land, U.S. Army Col. Richard Dodge is remembered to have actually said, in 1867, “Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone.” That makes me want to cry. How does that make you feel? Are you proud of that? Or does it make you sick? Think about that. These days, we still haven’t gotten over ourselves, though for different reasons a century and a half later. Now, we’re still trying to play God in Montana, as lawsuits and legislation and protests get thrown back and forth between conservation groups, federal agencies, and entitled ranchers who shouldn’t even be there in the first place, fighting over whether elk and bison should live up there in their original habitat that’s been taken over by cows and sheep, and, if so, how many. So, there’s really no end to our self-righteous supremacist mentality in this world. Sounds like it’s about brucellosis getting transferred from wildlife to cattle, which wouldn’t matter if there were no cattle there, now would it? Just saying. The few natives that are left are trying to get some of these beasts transferred over to them. That would be nice. They do a lot better job of respecting wildlife than us white trash ever did.

I’m forever amazed at how scrappy little prairie dogs manage to make their way in our world. You can pass entire prairie dog towns in highway medians and there they are, cute as can be, living their lives, doing prairie dog stuff, hanging in there. It’s like they’re immune to all our poisons and tire scraps and auto emissions. If everything else on the planet dies, I imagine they’ll be the last cute fuzzy little mammals hanging in there, to start anew after the mass extinction, along with less cute rats and mice. However, we seem to find it necessary to exterminate prairie dogs too. At this point, they’re down to less than 2% of their range, and entitled ranchers continue to kill them off by whatever means possible. They just can’t leave them be. Why? Well, it turns out that in their valuable contribution to prairie ecosystems, they create hazardous potholes for livestock and ranch vehicles. These potholes, while absolutely necessary for prairie grassland health and productivity, are inconvenient for humans who don’t belong there in the first place. So here we go, moving them along with poisons and bombs so they don’t bother us, even though they were there first.

Another problem is that prairie dogs carry fleas that carry bubonic plague. So let’s kill every single animal in our world that has a potential of transmitting a disease under specific circumstances at some point in their lifetime, when we humans, who have no business in their world, come in contact with them? Does that include dogs that can transmit rabies, or cats that can transmit cat-scratch fever, causing miscarriages and deformity in infants? Or horses, cows, chickens, and pigs that can transmit endless diseases, from sleeping sickness to chicken pox? With that mentality, shouldn’t we also kill all the monkeys too, since they could harbor the dreaded HIV? And, while we’re at it, shouldn’t we include ourselves? After all, we harbor as many germs and viruses as any other species out there, and we’re actually quite filthy compared to most of the animal kingdom. Look at the diseases we brought with us from Europe that killed most of the Native Americans. In reality, we are the most dangerous of all, since there is no place we won’t go or move or invade. We can survive anywhere. We just jump right in there and take over, finding ways to use the resources and get rid of anyone or anything that gets in our way. It’s who we are and what we do. And that’s what we really need to change. That is, if we want to keep our planet.

And then there’s the infamous Wildlife Services that we fund with our tax dollars. In a typical year, they kill 2.7 million wild animals, including golden eagles, barn owls, black-tailed prairie dogs, mountain lions, and wolves, basically any animal that inconveniences people in one way or another, whether as a direct threat or in a habitat that people are trying to use for their own



Montana State Senator Mike Fox (Gros Ventre, Democrat), who served as Fort Belknap’s director of Fish and Wildlife from 1991 to 2001, oversaw early efforts to restore buffalo, swift foxes, and black-footed ferrets to the reservation. The goal was to “create a steady, healthy population of native animals that were driven to extinction because of the different uses of the land,” he said. “Like when they started poisoning the prairie dogs off in the ‘30’s and ‘40’s and wiped out the ferrets that were native here, and the same with the swift fox. We want to make as complete an ecosystem as we can, along with the buffalo.”

gain. Just blow 'em away and get rid of them. I can't for the life of me imagine why it would be necessary to get rid of a golden eagle or a barn owl; about all I can think is maybe they were dive-bombing somebody's cat?

In one of the few remaining frontiers, the Brazilian Amazon, indigenous Awá who have lived in harmony with the forest for millennia, want only to be left alone to live their lives in peace. But evidently that's too much to ask. If they could be left alone, the intricate web of life would stay in balance in this particular ecosystem. But no. Now that we've overpopulated the rest of the world, they're now being constantly harassed by illegal loggers. Isn't this yet another indication that we've gone too far? I mean, just the very unethical practice of intruding on land not our own to harvest wood meant for others who do not live there, who have overrun the resources in their own land and now are pressuring other lands—that says it all, doesn't it? We're always taking and taking and taking until that land is completely depleted, then we'll search out the next best source of goods, and take that too, squeezing out the native diversity and inhabitants in the process. It's what we do. And if we don't learn to control our numbers and our ostensible "needs," we'll run our beautiful planet down to a bare rock, where nothing will be left, including ourselves. And it will be entirely our fault. We'll have no one to blame but ourselves. For our reckless stupidity, selfishness, and greed.

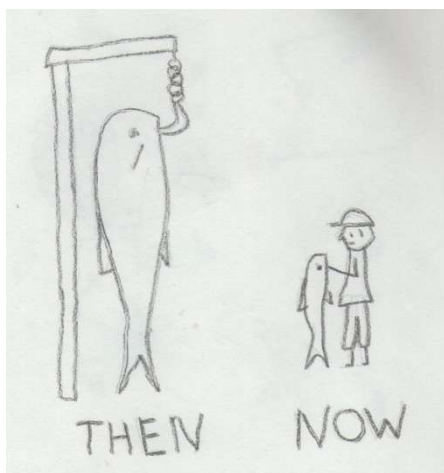
So, after reading all this, what do you think? Do you consider yourself ethical? If so, how do you answer the question, "Do I deserve to live on this beautiful planet, after the way I've treated it and the other life that lives here?" Do you consider yourself a part of the problem or a part of the solution? In this era, we *really really really* need all of us to be part of the solution. Think about that.

Cultural Issues

Consider the importance of purpose in life. We all need it. People with purpose are content, those without, less so. Do you have purpose? What is it? Think about that. Obviously, number one is my family, but our sons are grown and don't need my constant oversight any more. At this point, my purpose happens to be the environment. I'm constantly coming up with things I can do better, and I do my best to bring others on board, even as I get told to shut up and stand down. All I can do is try, and if people don't want to hear it, that's on them. But without that purpose, I'd probably be challenged with justifying my very existence. I mean, why am I here if all I am doing is trashing the planet? When I know better? I'd probably be depressed and require big pharm drugs to keep me stable. Not that I'm never depressed. I am. But I'm not about to take drugs. At least, not big pharm addictive synthetics. Not that I don't like drugs, but I think it's better to keep it natural. After all, humans have been doing natural highs, including alcohol, since the beginning of time, and I happen to think that's a good thing. Anyway, I gain great pleasure and satisfaction going that extra mile to say no to the ugly consumerism, poisons, and carbon that are killing our planet. It makes me feel a little less lousy for simply being a white human.

Strachan Donnelley, founder of Chicago's Center for Humans and Nature, a think tank for environmental ethics, suggests an "ethics of responsibility" borne from the understanding, that we, ourselves, and everything we build, are a part of nature. "In a time of overwhelming and collective technological power, with its indefinite global and temporal reach, we are ethically enjoined to take care and be cautious. Human powers of action dangerously outstrip capacities for knowledge and wisdom. We are to do nothing that would throw evolved man and nature disastrously off balance, threaten their creative being, and thwart their emergent complexity."

"The Prairie Dog Conundrum," Christine Peterson, High Country News, January, 2025.



Have you ever heard of "ecological forgetfulness"? It's a relatively new term that refers to how generations get used to a different world as our population increases and our wildlife diminishes. Somebody born today is born into a world with more than 8 billion people and severely diminished wildlife and wild lands. They will never see or even likely be aware of species that have gone extinct or that used to be around in huge numbers, and now you almost never see one. This is particularly true of birds, since they're everywhere. In studies that have been conducted on this phenomenon, young people were completely oblivious to wildlife declines noticed by older generations, and some people hadn't even noticed declines that happened in their own neighborhoods, right before their eyes.

Researchers compared dock photos of trophy fish in Key West that were taken between 1957 and 2007, and the fish in 2007 were literally 90% smaller than in 1957. It turns out that our memories have a way of blinding us to the magnitude of gradual changes in the environment. Researchers have even come up with a term for it: “shifting baseline syndrome.”

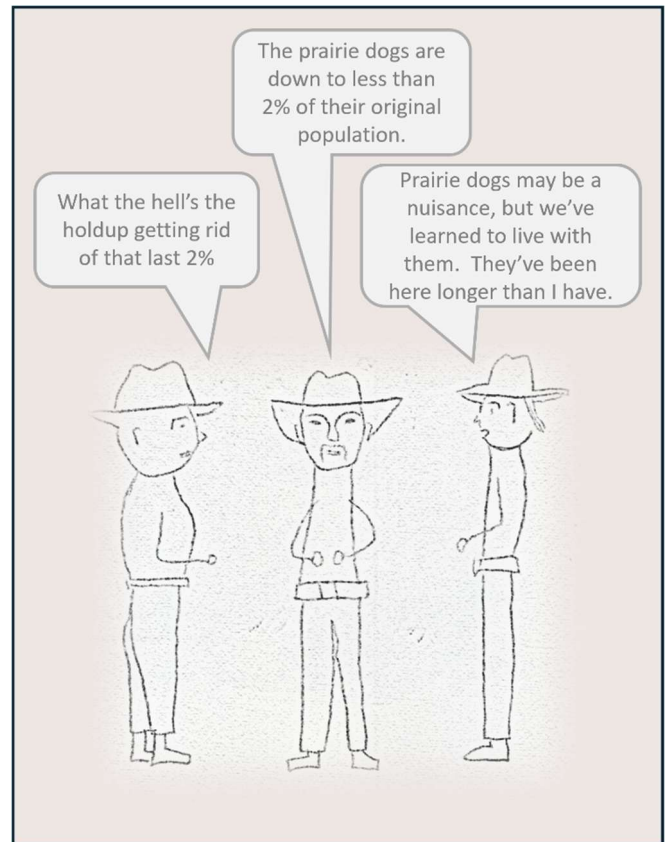
It’s pretty fascinating. North American grasslands in general have lost about 720 million birds, and about 3 billion birds have disappeared on the continent since 1970, but people don’t even notice unless they happen to be following the counts. Each human generation grows up with a new normal.

Overhunting is a direct indicator of local overpopulation, and it’s almost impossible to protect species, no matter how low they go, when there are desperate, starving people. For instance, in Uganda, populations historically stayed in balance with the wildlife that they subsisted on, because when populations got too big, it was controlled by wars, disease, and starvation. Now, they get food from outside the region and the population is out of balance, so poachers are setting illegal snares at a rate of more per square mile than anywhere else in the world. Again, at this point the answer is not to put money into saving individual species from extinction. Or even to shoot the poachers. To think that would do any good in an impoverished country with families that have six kids they can’t feed is delusional. Helping to feed the kids is fine for a short-term solution, but the only long-term solution is to provide birth control to help women control their family sizes, so they can choose not to have more kids than they can feed.

In the U.S., a lot of us have attitude, plain and simple. People let themselves be brainwashed into thinking that global warming is a hoax, since that’s so much easier to deal with mentally than the truth. People choose to buy into the rhetoric that humans are superior and that other life, including wildlife, is unimportant. There’s a lot of entitlement. Rogue ATV’s, dirt bikers and hikers create unauthorized paths instead of using existing paths like the rest of us. We need to use what’s already available and not keep taking up more space. If we can’t manage that with the population we have, then we need to cut back on the population so we can manage it in a way that’s pleasant and equitable for everyone.

One of our neighbors posted on Nextdoor that a lynx had killed a couple of his chickens. Then he went on about how this is why we shouldn’t be allowing predators like lynx in Colorado. To which I responded, “The lynx were here first, they belong here, and we don’t. So if you want to keep predators away from your chickens, then fortify the coop better.” There’s a reason I’m not very popular. I received a couple thank yous and a couple snarky responses that didn’t deserve an answer, they were so ignorant. I’ll be honest and say that I shudder to think how many squirrels and rabbits and rats would be pillaging my garden were it not for predators. We had a problem with rats for a short time, and then the hawks noticed them and the rats were gone in no time. My husband and son actually witnessed a hawk dive down and grab a rat and take off with it. I’m pretty convinced that the wildlife can take care of itself and that we need to stay out of it. Especially when they were here first.

As many as one million species are already headed towards extinction, and it’s because of us. The biggest question of our time is: will we wake up to this fact in time to save some scrap of what’s left, or will we ignore it and do nothing, right down to the end, until it’s too late?



“Ultimately, it’s up to each of us to decide which side of the balance our efforts will fall on. Have we given back? Have we volunteered, planted, honored, protected, donated, cared for, safeguarded, stewarded and restored more than we destroyed, denuded, consumed, abandoned or passively disregarded? If we all leave the place better than we found it, it will be a more beautiful world.”

Jennifer Sahn, High Country News, January, 2025

What are you going to do? Nothing? Or Something? Bitch and moan about how the lynx are inconveniencing you, or work on ways to cut your carbon footprint? And fortify your chicken coop.

Government

For the past two centuries, government has proven to be the enemy of wildlife and our planet, time after time. The problem is basically that pretty much every elected official, whether progressive or conservative, is “owned” by some greedy maggot or big corp. These days, it costs money to get elected because we’re all so overwhelmed with nonsense and lies on social media and whatever news we get that we have no idea what’s truth and what’s lies. Most of us are so brainwashed that we don’t even pay attention anymore, figuring there’s nothing we can do anyway. Which is how we just ended up electing a demented fascist who has no interest whatsoever in governing for the good of the people, and certainly not for wildlife or the planet. He ran solely to avoid prison for his crimes and treason against the United States of America. And he won because there are enough ignorant people of voting age in this country who got sucked into his lies and promises that he made solely to stay out of jail. Our bad.

My point is, if we can’t do any better than that in an extremely serious, globally impactful election, when we literally choose the antichrist over an experienced, impactful official who wants to lead for all the right reasons and would actually be good for the planet, as a species, at least here in the U.S., we’re taking ourselves and our world down. For four to eight years, we have some level of progress, with more land for wildlife and encouragement of renewables, and then four to eight years of “drill baby drill”. And it’s too bad, because we only have four years until the tipping point of no return for our planet.

The government can be either an ally or an enemy to wildlife, and we citizens have to pay the bills through our taxes whether we like it or not.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is an example of our government helping greatly with wildlife, and it has done a lot of good for a lot of species. Without the ESA, we would have completely lost the last remnants of ancient forests— and entire ecosystems that depended on them— in the Pacific Northwest to logging without a second thought. And, ironically, the loggers themselves would have destroyed their own resource base for their industry by scraping the entire web of life.

However, I think that we now understand more about the web of life than we did when the ESA was established in 1973. Specifically, that saving one species at a time is not only extremely expensive, it is a difficult or impossible long-term solution if the underlying reasons for the problems aren’t addressed. If the reason for the loss of the sage grouse is that we’ve taken over the prairie that they need to survive, then we can’t help them recover unless we return a large portion of prairie back to wildlife. We can’t save the whales without letting the krill stock recover. Another big problem with the ESA is that, when property is involved, people get up in arms when they get told what to do with their property. This is why it would be a whole lot more effective to set aside reserves, which is something that only the government can do.

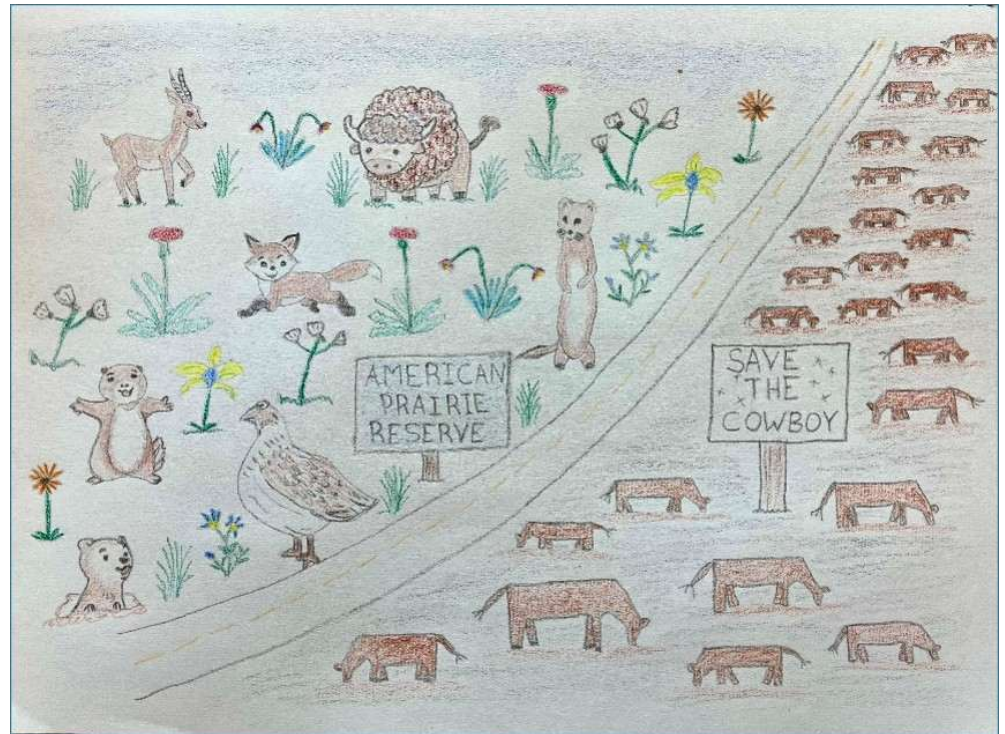
The national parks, wilderness, sanctuaries, and certain national monuments play huge in the U.S. in giving wildlife the space that they need in the form of reserves on land and in the ocean. However, we’re falling far short of the land that wildlife need, which is optimally 50% of the total area of the planet, both above and below sea level.

Most of the available open space is in the West, where the U.S. government, in an effort to take over the land from indigenous tribes, allocated land that they stole from Native Americans to white settlers in 1862, with the Homestead Act. The settlers were originally given 160 acres of federal land for ranching and farming, but it turned out the land was too dry, so the government increased it to 640 acres for livestock. In reality, the land isn’t that great for ranching, with a lot of acreage needed, and now ranchers need to own and lease thousands of acres of public land to make ends meet. Meanwhile, huge amounts of land are taken from wildlife that would thrive there just to accommodate a few ranchers with a few cows. In my opinion, this land should be returned back to wildlife to accommodate the needs of the many, meaning the wildlife, although it would obviously piss off a few spoiled ranchers who are only there because of an outdated and misguided act.

A conservation group, American Prairie Reserve (APR), is working to give back grassland to wildlife in Montana. They are using private funding to acquire land from interested landowners to create a reserve of 5,000 square miles, combining private and public grassland along the Missouri River. They plan to tear out interior fences, replace the cattle with buffalo, and restore native vegetation to create optimum conditions for recovery. This would go a long way towards restoring the wildlife that the original homesteaders decimated in less than 10 years by slaughtering them for cash and sport, building fences and roads that fractured their

habitat, and bringing in livestock that spread disease and competed for forage. This would give the bison, elk, antelope, grizzlies, bighorn sheep, wolves, swift foxes, and black-footed ferrets that were driven to near-extinction by the settlers a glimmer of hope for recovery.

However, not everybody likes the idea, as sensible as it is. The surrounding ranchers are resisting even if they won't be impacted, by overplaying the potential that bison could infect their cattle with brucellosis even though the APR bison are disease-free. In reality, this is really just another change in land use that is good for wildlife and not bad for the people, with entitled ranchers simply resisting change for the sake of resisting change, after they've been responsible for severe change, like horrendous damage to land and wildlife, in the first place. And, did the wildlife have a choice? Nope. My own feeling is that it's the selfish entitled ranchers and their cows that have to go. Their lifestyle is obsolete. Get over it. Why should a few individuals get to continue their lifestyles without compromise as they continue to destroy the web of life that we all depend on for our very survival?



Montana's Republican-dominated legislature passed a joint resolution asking the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to deny APR's petition to modify enough BLM grazing allotments totaling 250,000 public acres, to replace cattle with bison. This forced APR to scale back the request to 48,000 acres. This is a disappointing example of how the government can willfully resist common sense change for good.

We humans need to get over ourselves to save our species and our planet. To get up in arms over sensible actions to address the rights of other species, who should ethically have rights too, is immature, selfish and should be unacceptable in today's overcrowded and over allocated world. With this attitude, we are squeezing out other species on the planet. And, I have to ask, if we can't figure out a way to co-exist with the human population we currently have, if we can't figure out how to coexist with the other rightful heirs to this planet, without further reducing their numbers and diversity, then what are we going to do if we keep increasing our population?

Can we figure out a way to respectfully coexist with other life without raping more from this planet? If we can't figure out how to do that, then I'm going to strongly suggest that we have no business continuing to increase our numbers. And to do so is unconscionable and irresponsible, in the extreme. Especially when it's so easy to do, in the long run, if we would all just stick together on this one issue. It's our planet. For crying in the night, let's not be stupid.

And if you care about anybody besides yourself, if you care about the planet, the web of life and the very existence of our own human species, if you care about future generations and your own descendants, please don't vote for small-minded crooks who are owned by greedy corporations who insist on polluting, decimating, and trashing at will to keep themselves wealthier than any human needs to be. Seriously, why would anyone vote for politicians who only stand for a few rich people, who don't care about the planet or the rest of us? Why vote for leaders who don't support women's rights to choose their family sizes, when increasing population will drive wildlife to extinction? Why vote for leaders who are taking advantage of ignorance among the masses, who aren't in the least interested in leading for good, who only run to stay out of jail for their crimes against humanity and against their country?

Think about that. Who do you vote for? Do you vote for or against the planet? Do you vote for or against wildlife? Do you vote for or against humanity? Do you vote for or against future generations?

Our entire existence depends on saving our wildlife. So goes the wildlife, so goes the human species. This is quite the daunting task, and if we manage to get through this and persevere, we'll be among the few and rare species in the universe to have done so. There's a theory out there that the reason we haven't been especially successful at finding life on other planets, or even from other planets, other than the Roswell alien aircraft, the Great Pyramids, and the Nazca lines of Peru, is because civilizations don't manage to evolve much beyond where we are now without killing off their planet. You gotta wonder.

"Where is everybody?",
Enrico Fermi, 1950,
regarding the search for
life in the universe.