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Stop Destroying Our Home

Imagine a world devoid of birds chirping, squirrels scampering about, and trees reaching far into the sky. It may seem incredibly farfetched, and though many people will insist it is, this is actually a very real threat. Steve Irwin brings up this critical point on his show *The Crocodile Hunter*, telling us how increasing human population and development are rapidly diminishing the habitats of the world's plants and animals. This causes severe declination in the populations of both animals and plants alike, and the loss of entire species every year.

There are those who say that we don't need all this "wildlife", that we can survive perfectly fine on our own resources and that we shouldn't care about the other life on this planet. Well, first of all, we **cannot** survive at all "on our own resources", which, by the way, **are** the plants and animals that we're destroying, and the elements that those beings keep in good balance. Secondly, without all these organisms keeping the ecosystem in balance, the entire life cycle would break down completely. As an example, I'll create a scenario in which the vast majority of the world's natural non-human habitats have been exterminated due to human pollution:

Taking a look around your general surroundings, you initially see rows and rows of layered "cookie-cutter" houses and shopping centers, a vast network of roadways, and many vehicles traversing the roads. Not so unusual, until you notice the serious lack of trees and grass, or any other plants for that matter—in fact, you're standing on Astroturf. And there are no

people walking around outside either; you hear no animal noises, no chatter, only the harsh, hot breeze on the walls of the buildings and the rush of the cars and trucks that pass. Presently, you notice a family inside a house, having a nice sit-down dinner. You walk over and notice that they are all wearing a plastic-like material, and the food they are eating is made up entirely of what appears to be oatmeal.

Suddenly, as you're trying to understand the situation, the slight headache you've had for the past few minutes develops very quickly into dizziness and light-headedness, and you black out. When you wake, you find yourself on the couch of the family you had been watching, the four of them now watching TV around you. You notice a bowl of the oatmeal in front of you and, as you inhale, you catch a whiff of the foul smelling gruel. You then notice an online news article on the laptop set on the table in front of you, and see that a headline reads "GLOBAL OXYGEN DEFICIENCY AT HIGHEST IN HISTORY; EXPERTS SEE NO REAL RELIEF IN SIGHT." As you scroll down, you discover that the rest of the article talks about how the near complete eradication of plant life on the surface has seriously crippled the oxygen-CO₂ cycle inland and created a major imbalance of the two gasses, with an O₂ deficiency and a carbon dioxide over-abundance. Only the wealthy and incredibly lucky are able to live above the ocean, where there is a more natural balance of atmospheric gasses, away from the pre-packaged oxygen containers everyone inland has to buy regularly for their vehicles and buildings. The headline of another article further down reads, "HEAT INDEX AT A RECORD-BREAKING 185°"—you need not read any further.

While this may be a bit of an exaggeration, it's not far off. The effects of losing so much plant life would indeed have catastrophic effects on large parts of our environment. While 70%

of the planet's oxygen does come from bodies of water, most of that oxygen stays over the water, or is cycled into the upper atmosphere or back into the water itself. The majority of our inland oxygen is derived from the trees, grass, and other various land foliage growing there. Not to mention, almost all of the carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide filtration occurs in our trees, keeping our air relatively clean of pollutants. And it's not just the air that plants maintain; their roots are like tunneling anchors that hold the dirt down with them, preventing wind and rain from eroding it, while nourishing the ground with minerals and pulling water from deep underground back to the surface and into the cycle. Removing these natural anchors would leave vast areas of open dirt, which would spawn massive dust storms and mudslides, plus all that ground water would be trapped below ground, lest we began drilling, which would only upset the ground even more.

It isn't just plants though. The greatly varying animal species are highly integral to our environment as well, because they maintain the plants we use for gas filtration, food, and material resources. Some also serve as our food, some as companions, and more still as decomposers—those creatures which recycle our waste products back into the Earth in order to maintain a healthy equilibrium. They fill our lives with wondrous sounds and images, provide inspiration and even material goods. Needless to say, their loss would mean calamity to the entire world, not just to us people.

But what can be done about this? How can we prevent this horrible, bleak future from becoming reality? The answers are simple and relatively easy to follow: we **MUST** stop our sprawling out over the entire world, inch-to-inch; we **MUST** recycle everything we can; we **MUST** embrace more environmentally friendly energy resources; and we **MUST** limit our consumption and consumerism. The laws of Nature are clear and we have an obligation to

adhere to them. Humans do not need anywhere near the space or resources we consume, nor do we need to continue using such hazardous and poisonous fuels for our machinery. The consumerism may not be an easy thing to stop, but it is quite simple, if people would only take an interest and apply themselves. We already have so many ads telling us to lesson the gluttony, so many government dollars put into research on ways to limit consumption; all we need to do is take a step back, look at ourselves from the outside, and follow these messages of warning. And the same goes for the unnecessary fuel usage: we no longer need to use gasoline as our primary fuel source, because we have so many other options that our governments have spent time and money on developing. Hydrogen and electricity powered vehicles, solar energy, and even wind energy have become well known to us; yet we don't embrace them because combustion based fuels are far too familiar and integrated for people to comfortably convert from, or so they think. The truth is, these natural resources are very simple and easy to switch to, and don't hurt the environment at all. The only thing stopping us from changing our ways and making the world a better place is our unwillingness to deviate from what we already know and are accustomed to—the perpetual human dilemma.

The bottom line is, wake up and smell the roses. Earth is in pain, and we are the cause. But we are also the fix, and the sooner we all realize this, the sooner we can begin repairing the damage done by thousands of years of human pollution. The solutions are everywhere, and some people are embracing them; but the vast majority of humanity still is not, making our restoration attempt almost impossible. So this is a cry to everyone else, to everyone who still, after all this time and all these signs, refuse to accept the responsibility of repairing the world we

have all butt destroyed: Stop ruining this beautiful world we live in and start making a difference.