

Overpopulation Is the Problem

Author: BENNETT, JACK

Source: BioScience, 57(2) : 101

Published By: American Institute of Biological Sciences

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1641/B570219>

The BioOne Digital Library (<https://bioone.org/>) provides worldwide distribution for more than 580 journals and eBooks from BioOne's community of over 150 nonprofit societies, research institutions, and university presses in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences. The BioOne Digital Library encompasses the flagship aggregation BioOne Complete (<https://bioone.org/subscribe>), the BioOne Complete Archive (<https://bioone.org/archive>), and the BioOne eBooks program offerings ESA eBook Collection (<https://bioone.org/esa-ebooks>) and CSIRO Publishing BioSelect Collection (<https://bioone.org/csiro-ebooks>).

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Digital Library, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Digital Library content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non-commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne is an innovative nonprofit that sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Overpopulation Is the Problem

I greatly enjoyed reading "The Millennium Assessment," by Fred Powledge (*BioScience* 56: 880–886). It presented a reasonable program to discover how bad things are, which is, I suppose, frequently necessary to have fresh ammunition to use in trying to wake up our national leadership.

What I find lacking in the whole approach, not only in this article but in the profession as a whole, is the failure to openly recognize that none of it matters as long as we fail to correct the underlying cause of nearly all of our

problems: overpopulation. We already know enough to recognize that without a reduction of the population of humans, no proposed programs will have any real effect. The human population grows more rapidly than any ecological protection or amelioration program can be produced or take effect.

JACK BENNETT

Jack Bennett (e-mail: piper50w@earthlink.net) is Professor Emeritus of Biology at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.

doi:10.1641/B570219

Include this information when citing this material.

Response from Powledge

As Dr. Bennett points out, population growth is at the base of virtually all environmental problems. Without it, there

would probably have been no need for a Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

I can't speak for the MA's authors, but surely the significance of population growth figured in all their research. Just a few pages into their flagship report (Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends), they write that "increasing consumption per person, multiplied by a growing human population, are the root causes of the increasing demand for ecosystem services" (p. 4). What's missing from most such discussions (including my piece) is a plan for dealing with overpopulation that the world will accept. That's a terribly difficult cat to bell.

FRED POWLEDGE

Fred Powledge (e-mail: fredpowledge@earthlink.net) is a freelance writer based in Hollywood, MD.

doi:10.1641/B570220

Include this information when citing this material.

Letters to the Editor

BioScience

1444 I Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
E-mail: bioscience@aibs.org

The staff of *BioScience* reserves the right to edit letters for clarity without notifying the author. Letters are published as space becomes available.

ΦΣ

Phi Sigma

ΦΣ

The Academic Honor Society for the Biological Sciences

- established in 1915 for the recognition of academic excellence and research in the biological sciences
- member of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS)
- member of the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS)
- affiliate of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

For more information, contact: Henry R. Owen, Ph.D.
President of Phi Sigma Honor Society
Department of Biological Sciences
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL 61920 USA

or visit our web site at: www.phisigasociety.org