

WILD EARTH

SUMMER 2001

DAVE FOREMAN ON CORNUCOPIANISM

Saving the Sagebrush Sea

Song of the Winter Wren

Migrant Pollinators

Wild Farming



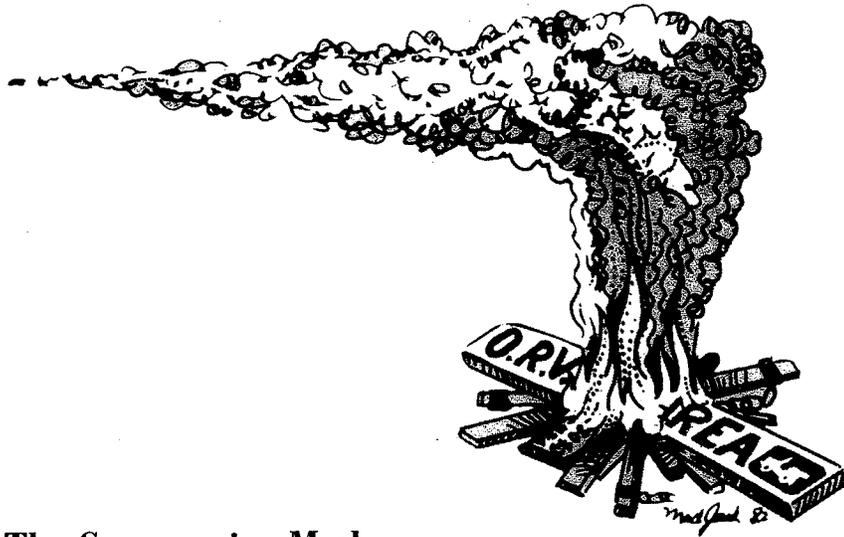
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Around the Campfire

by Dave Foreman



The Cornucopian Myth

A GENERATION AGO, the American establishment was caught up in "the golden optimism of the 1950s." One report funded by the Rockefeller Brothers foresaw, "New technologies, more efficient extraction processes, new uses may open up new worlds. Even now we can discern the outlines of a future in which, through the use of the split atom, our resources of both power and raw materials will be limitless...."¹

In 1966, *Time* magazine predicted that everyone in the US would be independently wealthy by 2000 and that only 10 percent of the population would have to work. *Time* quoted Rand Corporation scientists, who described how "Huge fields of kelp and other kinds of seaweed will be tended by undersea 'farmers'—frogmen who will live for months at a time in submerged bunkhouses.... This will provide at least a 'partial answer' to doomsdayers who worry about the prospects of starvation for a burgeoning world population."²

In 1967, *Time* made the "25 and Under" generation "Man of the Year," predicting, "He is the man who will land on the moon, cure cancer and the common cold, lay out blight-proof, smog-free cities, enrich the underdeveloped world and, no doubt, write finis to poverty and war."³ Well, "he" did land on the moon.⁴

In 1974, Nobel Laureate in Economics Robert Solow wrote, "It is very easy to substitute other factors for natural resources, then.... The world can, in effect, get along without natural resources, so exhaustion is just an event, not a catastrophe."⁵ I wonder if he would have changed his opinion had he stepped out of the abstract and into the real. I suppose he would have regarded dying of thirst as an event, not a catastrophe.

For those who believe we will soon be able to shoot our surplus population off into space to settle unknown planets, Garrett Hardin provides a few scientific details that show how absurd such a notion is.⁶ He summarizes the silliness by writing, "As of 1991 more than a quarter of a million people would have had to be shot off the earth *each day* just to keep earth's population constant at 5.3 billion."⁷

continues on page 2

The opinions expressed in Campfire are my own, and do not necessarily reflect official policy of The Wildlands Project. —DF

Wild Earth

*The Journal of Wildlands
Recovery and Protection*

Publisher Dave Foreman
Editor Tom Butler
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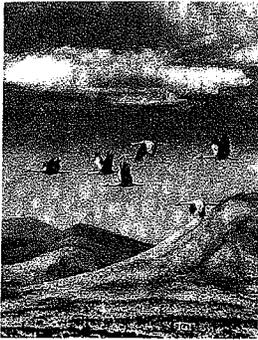
*Networks of People Protecting
Networks of Land*

WE ARE AMBITIOUS. We live for the day when grizzlies in Chihuahua have an unbroken connection to grizzlies in Alaska; when wolf populations are restored from Mexico to the Yukon to Maine; when vast forests and flowing prairies again thrive and support their full range of native plants and animals; when humans dwell on the land with respect, humility, and affection.

Toward this end, The Wildlands Project is working to restore and protect the natural heritage of North America. Through advocacy, education, scientific consultation, and cooperation with many partners, we are designing and helping create systems of interconnected wilderness areas that can sustain the diversity of life.

Wild Earth—the quarterly publication of The Wildlands Project—inspires effective action for wild Nature by communicating the latest thinking in conservation science, philosophy, policy, and activism, and serves as a forum for diverse views within the conservation movement.

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