



The Mass Extinction Trope

They're baack! After two decades, the UN's eco-globalist faction has returned to Rio de Janeiro to put the "plan" back in "planet." The so-called Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development is an attempt to recreate the giddy grandeur of the first Rio extraordinaire conference, held back in 1992 under the auspices of one worlder and New Age devotee Maurice Strong. That august event produced Agenda 21, an ambitious blueprint for international environmental planning during the 21st century, all to be carried out within the framework of the UN system and paid for in the coin of national independence. Now that we're more than a decade into the new century, the globocrats have [convened anew](#) in order to fine-tune their agenda.



To be sure, the global environmental agenda has moved down a bit on the priority list in the wake of 9/11 and the still-unfolding world economic collapse. But its perfervid proponents haven't gone away, and have lost none of their ardor. The planet, they never tire of informing us, is a fragile, vulnerable place, where the cancer-like growth of the human race has far outstripped our world's available resources. They also warn that as a result of our unchecked human activity, temperatures are rising alarmingly, threatening polar bears and countless thousands of other species that are in imminent danger of extinction in the biggest global die-off since the Permian-Triassic. It turns out that the only surefire remedy for this catastrophe a-borning is the creation of a global environmental regime tasked with bringing the destructive, consumerist impulses of humanity and their various governments under control, a move that will usher in a new epoch of sustainable growth and happy, vibrant ecosystems.

The global environmentalist movement has long been one of the United Nations' best talking points. Lots of people bristle at the prospect of, say, a single world bank, military, or system of taxation (all of which have been prominent agenda items at the UN for decades), but who doesn't get all goopy-eyed at the prospect of a world made safe for polar bear cubs (or any other arctic animal with thick white fur and large, dark eyes)? Who could possibly be in favor of the destruction of coral reefs, or the clear-cutting of rainforests where cuddly critters such as toucans and sloths are known to live? Who wants to see coastal New Jersey inundated by rising seas swollen with melted Greenland ice (okay, maybe we could spare Atlantic City)?

As it happens, the global environmental movement, like any consumer product, has evolved over the last 20 years to stay apace of consumer preferences. Nowadays, the Phenomenon Formerly Known as Global Warming is proving a harder selling point than it was a generation ago, as evidence continues to accumulate that the climate has been changing continuously since the Earth's inception, with or without human activity. Countries, especially in the developing world, are flat-out refusing to hamstring their productivity by imposing the sorts of absurd restrictions that the old climate-change regime tried



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to encourage. So this generation's edition of Rio has had a lot less to say about global warming.

What is popular is the mass extinction trope, an apocalyptic scenario that conjures up hellish visions of doomed dinosaurs choking on asteroid ash and hapless herbivores swept away by towering tsunamis. This epoch's edition of extinction is subtler, with legions of species ushered into oblivion by the alleged depredations of humanity, from deforestation to, well, just about every other human activity imaginable. To the more extreme hystericists, every new condominium poses a mortal threat to some fly subspecies, and every new road menaces some irreplaceable orchid population.

Now, some facts. Since the new century was born, the world has probably lost one large, charismatic species, the baiji or Yangtze River dolphin, which hasn't been seen or heard from in about five years. There are, in addition, a number of critically endangered island species, including on our own Hawaiian Islands, that probably will go extinct in coming years because of pressure from introduced predators such as snakes and rats; indeed, an overwhelming majority of extinctions that have occurred over the past few hundred years have been island species — flightless birds such as the dodo and other creatures with very restricted and restricting habitat requirements. Very few mainland species have gone extinct; in North America, since the arrival of Europeans, we've lost only six or seven bird species, for example. But the real story is the many species that have come close to extinction — e.g., the black-footed ferret, the whooping crane, and the California condor — which have been brought back from the brink by national conservation efforts — no UN bureaucrats were consulted. And the same can be said of endangered species worldwide, from the Mauritius kestrel to the Philippine eagle; it turns out that people with a yen to preserve their respective countries' natural beauty and biodiversity are to be found everywhere.

But none of this comes remotely close to that threatened mass extinction. In fact, species thought extinct are being rediscovered all the time, suggesting that most life on this planet is a lot more resilient than we give it credit for. Case in point: *Dryococelus australis*, aka the Lord Howe Island stick insect, colloquially known as the "tree lobster" because of its extraordinary size, which vanished from Lord Howe Island off Australia more than 80 years ago, victim of a sudden rat infestation occasioned by a shipwreck. A few years ago, several intrepid scientists discovered a surviving population of the bugs, clinging to existence on a pinnacle of rock far out in the ocean called Ball's Pyramid. The insect had survived for decades on a single scraggly bush; there are now many thousands, thanks to a hastily-organized captive breeding program. While there can be little doubt that habitat in some areas of the world is shrinking, it's by no means clear that the plants and animals that lived in such places are being wiped out. The overwhelming majority of species in eastern North America managed to survive the almost total clear-cutting of the eastern forests in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and have since rebounded as greater affluence has permitted a more robust conservationist ethic. Can we not expect the flora and fauna of, say, Amazonia to do the same?

Which leads to the real solution to the problems being discussed at Rio+20: greater prosperity equals better conservation, and greater prosperity will take place only under conditions of greater personal freedom. Poor countries (including, not so long ago, the United States) are poor conservationists. As the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America find their way to greater freedom, they will become better stewards of their respective environments; no one wants to live in a burnt-over scrubland.

But the policies being promoted by the United Nations are, as always, inimical to freedom. In order to promote sustainability, countries are being urged to pass laws — lots and lots of laws — governing and restricting patterns of consumption and productivity. As the *Washington Times* [summarized matters](#):



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The Rio+20 biodiversity and sustainability agenda means artificially reduced energy and economic development. It means rationed resources; sustained poverty and disease; and unsustainable inequality, resentment, conflict and pressure on wildlife and its habitats.

Our Creator has endowed us with a world rich in resources and even richer in intelligent, hardworking, creative people who yearn to improve their lives and be better stewards of our lands, resources and wildlife. The primary obstacles to achieving those dreams are the false ideologies, anti-development agendas and suffocating regulations being promoted at the Rio+20 Summit.

'Nuff said.



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