

Will we escape extinction? Probably not.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

All of us outdoor people should embrace Earth Day because it demonstrates our support for the outdoor world and the protection of our environment. The very first Earth Day was held April 22, 1970, and has grown since then. It now includes over 1 billion people in more than 193 countries. This year we celebrate Earth Day on Tuesday, April 22.

As a kid, I remember being tormented by all the old folks about how great it was in the old days. My grandfather used to ramble on and on about how I missed out on the best fishing and hunting, before there were too many people. He also had his concerns about leaving the country in the hands of my generation, especially if all the kids were like me, but we won't go there.

Fast forward more than 60 years, and I realize all those old people were right, it was better back when I was a kid. I can't imagine just how great the fishing and hunting used to be when my grandfather was a child. I feel sorry for the about what we are leaving our grandkids.

I have not been a believer in the "trust the science" policy and never will be. I will say that

science represents the best we know at this time, but science needs to continue learning and evolving, so questioning on our part is part of the evolution.

Science has allowed us to nearly double our lifespan during the past century, to increase our global abundance, and to deepen our understanding of the nature of the universe. Yet, scientific knowledge is not necessarily trusted. Partly because it is incomplete, and the learning is ongoing. Sometimes, it has to correct itself.

We are currently in what is known as the Holocene extinction, an ongoing extinction event caused, at least partially, by humans in the Holocene epoch. We have experienced widespread degradation of biodiversity hotspots, such as coral reefs and rain forests. The current rate of extinction of species is estimated at 100 to 1,000 times higher than natural background extinction rates. Conservative biologists now believe that human activity is the main cause.

There have been 5 previous mass extinctions, and the Holocene is sometimes called the sixth mass extinction. The preceding extinction took place at the end of the late Pleistocene, where most of the large animals (mega-faunal) left the playing field. The cause? Science believes that aside from humans, climate change may have been the driving factor in the megafaunal extinctions.

I think it interesting to note that climate changed being blamed for the last extinction, and partly the blame for much of the extinctions before. We are blaming climate change for the one we are experi-



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encing now. The difference is we, as humans, are accelerating the climate change.

It appears that climate change is going to happen with or without us, but we are the driving force in the rapid acceleration of it because of our industry, agriculture, and fossil fuel use. Carbon dioxide in the air is at its highest level ever (as far as science knows).

By the numbers, there were estimated to have been 770 million species to have spent some time here on Earth, and all but 8.7 million of them are gone. Kaput. That means 99% of what was ever here, is gone.

Of the 8.7 million species occupying the world with us today, we are losing an estimated 30,000

species annually. The best estimate suggests that this rate grows each year, and by 2050, we might be down 1 million species.

The real problem is this old Earth just isn't big enough. In 1800, the world population was less than 1 billion people. Today, there are 8 billion and still growing. The United Nations estimates world population will be 10.4 billion people by the year 2100.

The United States is in the same boat. In 1960, our population was around 180 million people. Today, we are close to 335 million strong. The Census Bureau estimates the U.S. will be near 366 million by the year 2100.

While these are just numbers, what really concerns me is the changing

ratio of humans to land animals. Ten thousand years ago, there were 1% humans padding around the Earth, and the other 99% was wild animals. Fast forward to today, and we have 32% humans, and only 1% wild animals. The other 67% is livestock.

Will humans be spared from the sixth mass extinction? Probably not. Consider there have been an estimated 23 species of humans on Earth at one time or another. That number is often disputed, with some estimates pointing to more, and others less. Today, Homo Sapiens are the only species of humans around. You would have to have blinders on to think we are going to escape this.

A study at the University of California at

Riverside has suggested we are in the seventh mass extinction. Science doesn't agree on the sixth mass extinction or the seventh, but what they do agree on, is we are in trouble.

We probably can't stop the mass extinction, but we can sure slow it down. Habitat loss and the unsustainable population explosion need to be controlled, and our destruction of the environment must stop. On the bright side, the extinction periods usually take better than a million years to unfold, so we do have time to try and fix things, but we better hurry. Perhaps for Earth Day, we can take a look at things a bit differently, and maybe strive to do better.

I find myself talking to my grandkids about how great the fishing was in the Florida Keys back in the 60s and 70s, and how great the deer and elk hunting was in Colorado and Wyoming back then. It drives them crazy, but I figure it is my turn now. Hopefully, we will leave them a world they can brag about later.

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GMUG National Forests to begin prescribed fires at Steamboat Rocks

Favorable weather conditions in place for hazardous fuels reduction work

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests are planning a prescribed fire, projected to start as early as April 21. Fire officials estimate this work to take approximately two to three days to complete. The GMUG uses prescribed fire to reduce overgrown vegetation to help protect local communities, infrastructure and natural resources from wildfires.

The prescribed burn will be located south of Lands' End Road and east of National Forest System Road #101, 20 miles east of Grand Junction, Colorado, within Mesa County. Approximately 500-1,000 acres are planned to be burned to reduce the threat of wildfire to the City of Grand

Junction municipal watershed and improve wildlife habitat.

The prescribed burn will be accomplished using joint-agency fire resources, utilizing aerial and hand ignitions. Air quality will be closely monitored to mitigate smoke related impacts to communities. Residual smoke may be visible in Grand Junction, Whitewater, Palisade and Delta communities for several days.

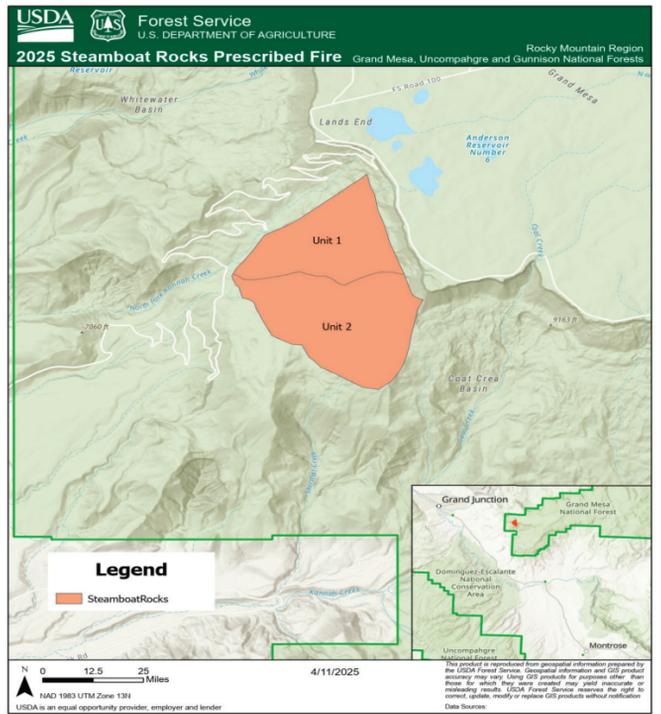
These areas may close to the public for several days for public safety. Watch for warning signs along roads and near all prescribed fire areas before and during burns.

Residents may experience smoke during the prescribed burns. Go to <https://fire.airnow.gov/> to find more detailed information about air quality. Fire managers have

obtained smoke permits from the State of Colorado and will comply with Colorado State air quality regulations. For more information on how prescribed fire smoke may affect your health, please visit: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/wood-smoke-and-health>.

Weather conditions will be evaluated in the hours before a burn begins. If conditions warrant, scheduled prescribed fire activities may be canceled.

Stay informed about the scheduled prescribed fires through the GMUG National Forests website, the GMUG Fire Info Facebook page and InciWeb, the interagency incident information system. Fire managers notify county emergency management officials when burning begins.



The advertisement is a horizontal banner. On the left, a woman in a purple jacket and a man in a plaid shirt are hiking in a field. In the center, the text "TRAIL TO TOWN" is displayed in large white letters. On the right, a woman in a blue shirt and a man in a plaid shirt are standing in front of a cafe, holding coffee and pastries. The Great Outdoors Company logo is on the bottom left, and the Marmot logo is on the bottom right. At the bottom, the address "10 SOUTH SELIG AVE" and phone number "970-249-4226" are listed, along with "MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401".