

Half of life on Earth gone since humans arrived

24th May, 2018



Humans represent a tiny fraction of all life on Earth, but are responsible for the destruction of 83 per cent of all wild mammals and half of our plant life. This is the analysis of a new study from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. The ground-breaking report is the first investigation

into the weight of every class of creature and life form on our planet. Lead researcher Professor Ron Milo explained what instigated the research. He said: "I was shocked to find there wasn't already a comprehensive, holistic estimate of all the different components of biomass." He hopes the study will provide, "a perspective on the very dominant role that humanity now plays on Earth".

There are 7.6 billion people on Earth, but they represent just 0.01% of all living things. Scientists say that is the same percentage as for termites. However, since we began walking on this planet, we have managed to cause the loss of most of its living species. Humans have also greatly changed the ratios of livestock to wild animals. Today, farmed poultry (mostly chickens) makes up 70% of all birds on the planet, with just 30% of birds being wild. Similarly, 60% of all mammals on Earth are livestock (mostly cattle and pigs), while just 4% are wild animals. Professor Milo hopes people will use his study, "as part of their world view [and] of how they consume" He said he hopes people will eat less meat.

Sources: theguardian.com / sciencealert.com / sciencemag.com

Writing

How can humans stop destroying the Earth?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

humans / fraction / destruction / plant life / planet / biomass / perspective / role / living things / termites / species / livestock / wild animals / poultry / cattle / meat

True / False

- a) Humans represent a large fraction of all life on Earth. T / F
- b) A study reported human activity has killed 83% of Earth's wild animals. T / F
- c) Researchers estimated the weight of all different types of life forms. T / F
- d) The study is one of many to estimate the biomass weight of species. T / F
- e) Scientists have the same biomass weight as termites. T / F
- f) Around 70% of all birds on Earth are on farms. T / F
- g) Around 40% of all mammals on Earth are wild animals. T / F
- h) A professor said he turned vegetarian after finishing the report. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. represent | a. innovative |
| 2. destruction | b. outlook |
| 3. ground-breaking | c. elements |
| 4. instigated | d. devastation |
| 5. components | e. proportion |
| 6. cause | f. untamed |
| 7. ratio | g. constitute |
| 8. wild | h. eat |
| 9. view | i. create |
| 10. consume | j. brought about |

Discussion – Student A

- a) How important are humans to this world?
- b) What will future generations think of the destruction?
- c) What do you think of nature?
- d) What can we do to reverse the loss of biodiversity?
- e) What role should humans play on Earth?
- f) What are your favourite creatures?
- g) What would Earth be like without humans?
- h) What three adjectives best describe this article?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Humans represent a tiny | a. their world view |
| 2. the weight of every | b. animals |
| 3. a comprehensive, holistic | c. now plays |
| 4. all the different components | d. (mostly cattle and pigs) |
| 5. the very dominant role that humanity | e. estimate |
| 6. cause the loss of most of its living | f. class of creature |
| 7. farmed poultry | g. fraction of all life on Earth |
| 8. while just 4% are wild | h. (mostly chickens) |
| 9. livestock | i. species |
| 10. use his study as part of | j. of biomass |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What will happen if the human population increases?
- What do you know about termites?
- What have humans done to cause so much loss to nature?
- Does it matter that most birds on Earth are on farms?
- How will the numbers in the article change in the next 100 years?
- Will you now reconsider what you eat?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- a tiny otrnCIFa of all life
- the esirodtntuc of 83 per cent
- the Isiyanas of a new study
- every class of reeutacr
- a comprehensive, holistic iaemestt
- the study will provide a epvepsrteci
- the same tnceeperga
- most of its living pcesies
- farmed ytpolru
- 60% of all mlmamsa
- sieokltcv (mostly cattle and pigs)
- of how they unoecms

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. i	7. e	8. f	9. b	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Eating Less Meat

You think eating less meat is the best way to help save Earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): planting trees, ending fossil-fuel use or countryside living.

Role B – Planting Trees

You think planting trees is the best way to help save Earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): eating less meat, ending fossil-fuel use or countryside living.

Role C – Ending Fossil-Fuel Use

You think ending fossil-fuel use is the best way to help save Earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): planting trees, eating less meat or countryside living.

Role D – Countryside Living

You think countryside living is the best way to help save Earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): planting trees, ending fossil-fuel use or eating less meat.

Speaking – Save Earth

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways of saving the planet at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • ban logging | • eating less meat |
| • end fossil-fuel use | • planting trees |
| • countryside living | • recycling more |
| • hybrid cars | • ban hunting |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.