

Born To Re-wild
By David Halbrook

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There is an organized *jihad* being waged by radical environmental and animal rights activists against hunting, fishing, and trapping. Some of this push is overt, while other efforts are subtle yet equally sinister.

These radical groups hope to substitute natural resource harvesting activities (such as hunting) by humans as the long-standing preferred method of wildlife management, and to instead adopt a new approach incorporating a theoretical but unrealistic natural predator-prey environmental balance. In their fantasy this balance would be “naturally” self-regulating, would bring the eco-system into harmony, and would make hunting unnecessary.

This contrasting natural resource management model is commonly known as “conservation biology” or euphemistically “rewilding.” The rewilding model rejects the traditional and centuries-old North American Model of Wildlife Management that intimately incorporates consumptive-users (such as hunters) into the process of managing natural resources and wildlife.

It’s the radical environmentalists’ utopian “Circle of Life.” But without humans in the circle.

Proponents of the worldview that rejects the North American Model of Wildlife Management are cunning in their approach to getting their agenda adopted. They start by advocating “conservation biology” to certain pre-disposed scientists, and they encourage those

“scientists” to become activists of the approach rather than neutral observers and reporters. These [scientists-cum-activists](#) then argue that the very human-designed natural conservation activities that have saved and preserved most wildlife species¹ should be tossed out and replaced with their view of a “natural ecological system” approach to wildlife management. Under their approach predators like coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bears and mesopredators² are counted on to thrive in dramatically increased numbers by preying on deer, elk, moose, small game herds, and even on livestock.

In perhaps the most stunning admission that human intervention can’t realistically be avoided when managing wildlife in the civilized world, the rewilders have a backup plan if the predators don’t kill enough game animals: put wildlife on [birth control](#). The Human Society of the United States (HSUS) says publicly that: “Hunting isn’t the answer. PZP contraception is a humane way to control the populations of deer and other wildlife.”

Carefully packaged, “rewilding” approach actually appeals to some susceptible outdoor enthusiasts – that is, until they discover that this scheme dramatically increases the numbers of many animals considered varmints or threats to humans, and minimizes or eliminates access to public land and the availability of game that can be taken by hunters.

Oh, and they also discover that a truly rewilded “nature” full of larger populations of predator species is a very dangerous place for humans.

All this in the name of protecting the proponents’ favored “keystone” predator species.

¹ Geist, V, 2006- The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

² A medium-sized predator which often increases population in abundance when larger predators are eliminated

The Rewilding Agenda

The details of this extravagant theory were first laid out by *Earth First* co-founder David Foreman. In his book, *Rewilding North America*, he says:

“Specific actions that best meet my criteria for continental-scale conservation are the following:

- *Reintroduce carnivores wherever possible*
- *Reintroduce beavers and other highly interactive species*
- *Establish species recovery goals for ecologically effective populations*
- *Generally halt all predator and “pest” control*
- *Reform wildlife management to adopt a more ecological approach*
- *Select and design new wilderness areas based on ecological principles*
- *Protect all large roadless areas on public lands*
- *Create larger roadless areas in the East*
- *Remove livestock from much of the public lands*
- *Reform livestock grazing where it continues*
- *Prioritize simple soil and gully erosion control*
- *Prohibit big tree logging*
- *Develop standards for ecological restoration in wilderness areas*
- *Remove abandoned and unnecessary livestock fencing*
- *Restrict all motorized vehicles to designated routes*
- *Reduce the miles of public lands roads*
- *Stop bogus R.S. 2477 (highway right-of-way) claims*

- *Establish landscape permeability as a public land management goal*
- *Identify and remove or mitigate barriers to wildlife movement*
- *Encourage ecological management of private, corporate, and tribal lands important for linkages*
- *Identify private lands that should be acquired on a willing-seller basis*
- *Restore a natural fire ecology*
- *Remove destructive, unnecessary dams*
- *Restore or mimic natural, over-the-bank flooding, where possible*
- *Establish in-stream flow as a beneficial water use*
- *Prioritize removal of exotic species that threaten native species and wildlands*
- *Design networks for climate change”*

That’s one hell of a “rewilding” wish list once you realize what he’s really advocating!

Foreman proposes ignoring or devaluing the past, present, and unavoidable future influence of human intellect on the entire world ecosystem – tools, energy sources, plant and animal husbandry; in short, all of the environmentally dominating consequences of civilization brought on by human kind’s intellect and our compulsion to survive and thrive.

“Rewilding” is a generally “anthropo-phobic”³ viewpoint of self-described “citizen conservationists” like Foreman. In *Rewilding North America*, Foreman argues that humankind is primarily responsible for all species extinction events since pre-historic man hiked out of Africa to search for food, water, territory, and perhaps to escape the kinds of pre-industrial climate change that was happening in Africa at the time. Foreman also comments negatively on the

³ An abnormal fear of people, especially in groups

Asian migration across the Siberian Land Bridge, Polynesians migrating across the Pacific and, in his later works, the northern movement of Latin Americans.

To him it seems those pesky intercontinental immigrants really messed up the world.

It all makes for fascinating, yet and frightening, reading. Foreman's position suggests that Humankind's evolution beyond a primate prey species in Africa was a huge mistake, not worth the cost to the animal kingdom. You can almost hear Foreman saying that human evolution – past the primitive caveman stage – was a natural error; one big blooper that can only be rectified by something like human population reduction on a mass scale.

Well, let's hope that's not happening.

Works by other conservation biologists such as Dr. Michael Soulé, who is active in California now, make the "animals before humans" point even more profoundly.⁴ Soulé's work is interesting because of his application of Albert Schweitzer's value system (one conceded to have "borrowed" heavily from Jainism⁵) to biological studies. Soulé admits that the wisdom of providing for maximum biodiversity as a goal cannot really be tested or proven scientifically. Which of course makes it no different from any of the world's other philosophies or religions.⁶

In other words, "rewilders" want us to accept their agenda *on faith*.

What is Really "Wild" Anyway?

⁴ Soulé, M, 2012- The Faith-Based, Trickle-Down Model of Conservation 5.0

⁵ A nontheistic religion founded in India in the 6th century BC by the Jina Vardhamana Mahavira as a reaction against the teachings of orthodox Brahmanism, and still practiced there. The Jain religion teaches salvation by perfection through successive lives, and noninjury to living creatures, and is noted for its ascetics.

⁶ Soulé, M, 1985- What is Conservation Biology?

It's hard to imagine public acceptance of a radical viewpoint like rewilding, one that apparently considers the evolution of Mozart, the Wright Brothers, Thomas Edison, and Steve Jobs to be Gaia's⁷ biggest mistake. The "rewilding" philosophy ignores that humans have always been a very natural part of nature anyway. The pre-historic human's brain doubled in size in two million years due to success as a hunter, and the nutritional benefits of that protein food supply. Cavemen hunted, domesticated wolves into dogs, refined wild seeds to grow and harvest crops, built farms, and built cities. In short, civilized humans have come to dominate "nature" because we as a species are more intelligent than other animals. Some humans may not like the current civilized agenda or state of human affairs, and admittedly some animal species have been limited, or even eliminated, by human domination. But that domination is nonetheless as "natural" as it gets. Just ask Charles Darwin. *Intellect* rules, not claws or jaws.

Regardless, much of the rewilding agenda has been at least suggested in many venues, and parts of it even initiated as government policy. The rewilders strive to reshape wildlife management agency philosophy along conservation-biology-as-theology lines. The rewilders have actually been successful in taking control of parts of the scientific agenda that make wildlife management decisions, like catch and bag limits for hunters nationwide.

Perhaps A Bit Too Re-Wilded?

⁷ In Biology, the "Gaia hypothesis" refers to the theory that the earth and everything on it constitutes a single self-regulating living entity; its name is derived from the Greek goddess Gaia, "the great mother of all"

Thankfully, the “conservation biology” agenda is not yet close to being fully accomplished. The “rewilders” will have to act fast before the general public catches on to their plan, because once the general public does, the public won’t like it. The “rewilding” faithful realize that their model doesn’t work without completely disrupting human activities. Once folks do catch on to that, the rewilders’ job will get a lot harder.

California’s failed experiment with mountain lion protection since 1999 typifies the flaws with the “rewilding” model. California’s mountain lion protection efforts have not realized any of the predicted natural control (by the mountain lions) over mesopredators (such as coyotes) despite large scale wilderness designations across the state. In other words, more mountain lions as protected predators have not led to fewer coyote predators. But having more lions in the state has led to some nature hikers being *eaten alive*, and it has scared the hell out of people who thought they really liked the natural wilderness experience – until it licked its lips and snarled at them from the bushes on the trail side.

Turns out the modern day public isn’t any more enthusiastic about a truly “wild” experience than Cro-Magnon humans were as they struggled to survive and to make a better, less vulnerable, more civilized life for themselves.

If wolves, wolverines, coyotes and [grizzly bears](#) are to be reintroduced into the “rewilding” mix, there may not be enough wild prey to feed these types of keystone predators. Of course, if there are not enough animals for the predators to eat, you can bet the number of hunting tags issued will plummet. And what will these predators eat once all the accessible wildlife are gone? Trash? Pets? Kids? Coyote attacks are on the rise in suburbia. The no-longer

endangered American alligator has grown fond of small dogs and even retirees. Remember, under the theology of “conservation biology,” wildlife comes first. Fido is expendable.

What’s Next?

Sadly, it is clear that with a pseudo-academic theology such as “conservation biology,” there is little room for traditional activities such as logging, ranching, mining, farming, hunting, fishing, transportation, homebuilding and nation building. Nor is there room for many other forms of human activity. This is especially apparent when academics note that land and ecologies will have to be managed in such a way as to adapt for climate change, meaning that new lands to the North and in higher elevations will inevitably face additional restrictions on human activity to make way for endangered species of wildlife, plants, (maybe even microbes) and their habitat.

You can have faith in that.

Will the sporting community be able to join together and successfully resist these radical groups’ hostile takeover of wildlife and natural resource management? Will we be able to maintain our cohesion, or will defections and side-deals by splinter groups with their own selfish agendas result in defeat? The sporting community and the other stakeholders need to take issue with this bias “peer-reviewed” agenda science masquerading as scientific fact. It is time for hunters, fishermen, recreational shooters, and critical providers of food, water, and energy to band together and exert their market place power on the state game management agencies that are beginning to take all of their real constituents for granted.

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