

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY 2013

7 BILLION AND COUNTING

Starting a conversation this Earth Day about the impacts of unsustainable human population growth on the survival of other species can be difficult. These talking points will help you take action.

The global population reached 7 billion in the fall of 2011 and is projected to grow to 9 billion by 2050. Left unchecked it could reach 15 billion by the end of the century — far beyond what the Earth can sustain while also supporting a broad diversity of life.

Most biologists agree that we have entered the planet's sixth mass extinction event and that this time the cause is not geologic or cosmic but human. As a result of our proliferation and consumption of natural resources, plant and animal species extinction rates are now up to 1,000 times the normal "background" rate.

The United States has the highest fertility rate of any industrialized country, with a population that has already surpassed 300 million and could reach 450 million by 2050.

Global population has doubled since the first Earth Day in 1970 from 3.5 billion to 7 billion. Another 227,000 people are added to the planet every day — 85 million per year. The 1968 publication of Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* was a major catalyst for the initial Earth Day and the subsequent birth of the modern environmental movement.

The Center for Biological Diversity has handed out more than 500,000 free Endangered Species Condoms since the project began, relying on volunteers in all 50 states as our distributors. We're handing out 15,000 more for Earth Day 2013 to highlight the urgent need for robust family-planning and contraception programs.

The condoms are designed to draw attention to the well-documented — but little-discussed — connection between human population growth and the decline and extinction of other species.

The message of the condoms is straightforward: Taking responsibility for our reproductive decisions is part of ensuring plant and animal diversity around the globe.

Nearly 40% of all pregnancies in the world — and nearly 50% of pregnancies in the United States — are unintended, and some 200 million women who want access to birth control don't have it. Universal access to birth control should be treated as a fundamental human right and would provide a crucial means of reducing unsustainable fertility rates.

By supporting policies and local initiatives to help women continue to have access to education and family planning, you're helping to protect species diversity on our planet. Every essential human need depends on the diversity that exists in the natural world.

Take action yourself by talking about this issue with your friends, family and community.

Read more on our website,
7BillionAndCounting.org or
EndangeredSpeciesCondoms.org.

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