



UN Biodiversity Conference To Create ‘Paris Moment’ To ‘Rescue Nature’

The upcoming UN Biodiversity Conference is to nature what the Paris Conference was to global warming. The outcome will extend the 1,100 - page Global Biodiversity Assessment from 1995 and specify all human behaviors that are necessary to ‘rescue’ nature. □ TN Editor

Diplomats from 130 nations gathered in Paris on Monday to validate a grim UN assessment of the state of Nature and lay the groundwork for a rescue plan for life on Earth.

The destruction of Nature threatens humanity “at least as much as human-induced climate change,” UN biodiversity chief Robert Watson said as the five-day meeting began.

“We have a closing window of opportunity to act and narrowing options.”

A 44-page draft “Summary for Policy Makers” obtained by AFP

catalogues the 1001 ways in which our species has plundered the planet and damaged its capacity to renew the resources upon which we depend, starting with breathable air, drinkable water and productive soil.

The impact of humanity's expanding footprint and appetites has been devastating.

Up to a million species face extinction, many within decades, according to the report, and three-quarters of Earth's land surface has been "severely altered".

A third of ocean fish stocks are in decline, and the rest, barring a few, are harvested at the very edge of sustainability.

A dramatic die-off of pollinating insects, especially bees, threatens essential crops valued at half-a-trillion dollars annually.

Twenty 10-year targets adopted in 2010 under the United Nations' biodiversity treaty — to expand protected areas, slow species and forest loss, and reduce pollution — will, with one or two exceptions, fail badly.

Based on an underlying report that draws from 400 experts and weighs in at 1,800 pages, the executive summary has to be vetted line-by-line by diplomats, with scientists at their elbow.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) document, once approved, will be released on May 6.

Historically, conservation biology has focused on the plight of pandas, polar bears and a multitude of less "charismatic" animals and plants that humanity is harvesting, eating, crowding or poisoning into oblivion.

But in the last two decades, that focus has shifted back to us.

"Up to now, we have talked about the importance of biodiversity mostly from an environmental perspective," Watson told AFP ahead of the Paris meet.

Agriculture is key

“Now we are saying that Nature is crucial for food production, for pure water, for medicines and even social cohesion.”

And to fight climate change.

Forests and oceans, for example, soak up half of the planet-warming greenhouse gases we spew into the atmosphere.

If they didn't, Earth might already be locked into an unliveable future of runaway global warming.

And yet, an area of tropical forest five times the size of England has been destroyed since 2014, mainly to service the global demand for beef, biofuels, soy beans and palm oil.

“The recent IPCC report shows to what extent climate change threatens biodiversity,” said Laurence Tubiana, CEO of the European Climate Foundation and a main architect of the Paris Agreement, referring to the UN's climate science panel.

“And the upcoming IPBES report — as important for humanity — will show these two problems have overlapping solutions.”

Extinctions hard to see

That overlap, she added, begins with agriculture, which accounts for at least a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions.

Set up in 2012, the IPBES synthesises published science for policymakers in the same way the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) does on climate.

Both advisory bodies feed into UN treaties.

But the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has always been a poor stepchild compared to its climate counterpart, and the IPBES was added as an afterthought, making its authority harder to establish.

Biodiversity experts are trying to engineer a “Paris moment” for Nature akin to the 2015 Paris climate treaty.

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Stop biodiversity loss or we could face our own extinction, warns UN

Jonathan Watts, The Guardian, 6 Nov. 2018

The world must thrash out a new deal for nature in the next two years or humanity could be the first species to document our own extinction, warns the United Nations biodiversity chief.

Ahead of a key international conference to discuss the collapse of ecosystems, Cristiana Paşca Palmer said people in all countries need to put pressure on their governments to draw up ambitious global targets by 2020 to protect the insects, birds, plants and mammals that are vital for global food production, clean water and carbon sequestration.

“The loss of biodiversity is a silent killer,” she told the Guardian. “It’s different from climate change, where people feel the impact in everyday life. With biodiversity, it is not so clear but by the time you feel what is happening, it may be too late.”

Paşca Palmer is executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity – the world body responsible for maintaining the natural life support systems on which humanity depends.

Its members – 195 states and the EU – will meet in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, this month to start discussions on a new framework for managing the world’s ecosystems and wildlife. This will kick off two years of frenetic negotiations, which Paşca Palmer hopes will culminate in an ambitious new global deal at the next conference in Beijing in 2020.

Conservationists are desperate for a biodiversity accord that will carry the same weight as the Paris climate agreement. But so far, this subject has received [miserably little attention](#) even though many scientists say it poses at least an equal threat to humanity.

The last two major biodiversity agreements - in 2002 and 2010 - have failed to stem the [worst loss of life on Earth since the demise of the dinosaurs](#).

Eight years ago, under the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#), nations promised to at least halve the loss of natural habitats, ensure sustainable fishing in all waters, and expand nature reserves from 10% to 17% of the world's land by 2020. But many nations have fallen behind, and those that have created more protected areas have done little to police them. "Paper reserves" can now be found from Brazil to China.

The issue is also low on the political agenda. Compared to climate summits, few heads of state attend biodiversity talks. Even before Donald Trump, the US refused to ratify the treaty and only sends an observer. Along with the Vatican, it is [the only UN state not to participate](#).

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Bad Humans: UN Blames For Extinction Of One Million Species

U.N. Technocrats continue to throw fear-mongering mud at the wall to see what will stick. The extinction hasn't happened yet, but humans are blamed for it as if it has. The purpose is to drive the world into Sustainable Development, aka Technocracy. □ TN Editor

Up to one million species face extinction due to human influence, according to a draft UN report obtained by AFP that painstakingly catalogues how humanity has undermined the natural resources upon which its very survival depends.

The accelerating loss of clean air, drinkable water, CO₂-absorbing forests, pollinating insects, protein-rich fish and storm-blocking mangroves — to name but a few of the dwindling services rendered by Nature — poses no less of a threat than climate change, says the report,

set to be unveiled May 6.

Indeed, biodiversity loss and global warming are closely linked, according to the 44-page Summary for Policy Makers, which distills a 1,800-page UN assessment of scientific literature on the state of Nature.

Delegates from 130 nations meeting in Paris from April 29 will vet the executive summary line-by-line. Wording may change, but figures lifted from the underlying report cannot be altered.

“We need to recognise that climate change and loss of Nature are equally important, not just for the environment, but as development and economic issues as well,” Robert Watson, chair of the UN-mandated body that compiled the report, told AFP, without divulging its findings.

“The way we produce our food and energy is undermining the regulating services that we get from Nature,” he said, adding that only “transformative change” can stem the damage.

Deforestation and agriculture, including livestock production, account for about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, and have wreaked havoc on natural ecosystems as well.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report warns of “an imminent rapid acceleration in the global rate of species extinction.”

The pace of loss “is already tens to hundreds of times higher than it has been, on average, over the last 10 million years,” it notes.

“Half-a-million to a million species are projected to be threatened with extinction, many within decades.”

Many experts think a so-called “mass extinction event” — only the sixth in the last half-billion years — is already under way.

The most recent saw the end of the Cretaceous period some 66 million years ago, when a 10-kilometre-wide asteroid strike wiped out most lifeforms.

Scientists estimate that Earth is today home to some eight million distinct species, a majority of them insects.

A quarter of catalogued animal and plant species are already being crowded, eaten or poisoned out of existence.

The drop in sheer numbers is even more dramatic, with wild mammal biomass — their collective weight — down by 82 percent.

Humans and livestock account for more than 95 percent of mammal biomass.

“If we’re going to have a sustainable planet that provides services to communities around the world, we need to change this trajectory in the next ten years, just as we need to do that with climate,” noted WWF chief scientist Rebecca Shaw, formerly a member of the UN scientific bodies for both climate and biodiversity.

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Google's Parent Plans Global Species Wipeout Of All Mosquitoes

Nobody likes mosquitoes that bite and potentially carry disease, but the thought of extinguishing the species entirely is causing a lot of scientific concern. Conceptually, if interfering with the reproduction cycle works with the elimination mosquitoes, it could work with other species as well. □ TN Editor

Silicon Valley researchers are attacking flying bloodsuckers in California's Fresno County. It's the first salvo in an unlikely war for Google parent Alphabet Inc.: eradicating mosquito-borne diseases around the world.

A white high-top Mercedes van winds its way through the suburban sprawl and strip malls as a swarm of male *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes shoot out of a black plastic tube on the passenger-side window. These pests are tiny and, with a wingspan of just a few millimeters, all but invisible.

"You hear that little beating sound?" says Kathleen Parkes, a spokesperson for Verily Life Sciences, a unit of Alphabet. She's trailing the van in her car, the windows down. "Like a duh-duh-duh? That's the release of the mosquitoes."

Jacob Crawford, a Verily senior scientist riding with Parkes, begins describing a mosquito-control technique with dazzling potential. These particular vermin, he explains, were bred in the ultra-high-tech surroundings of Verily's automated mosquito rearing system, 200 miles away in South San Francisco. They were infected with Wolbachia, a common bacterium. When those 80,000 lab-bred Wolbachia-infected, male mosquitoes mate with their counterpart females in the wild, the result is stealth annihilation: the offspring never hatch.

Better make that 79,999. "One just hit the windshield," says Crawford.

Google's Parent Has a Plan to Eliminate Mosquitoes Worldwide

Mosquito-borne disease eradication is serious stuff for Alphabet, though it is just one of many of the company's forays into health care and life sciences. Through Verily and other branches of the company, Alphabet is investigating smart contact lenses, artificial intelligence applications for health care, and the molecular mechanisms of aging. Just this month, Google hired Geisinger Health Chief Executive Officer David Feinberg to oversee its many health-care initiatives.

Verily guards its technology closely. But it stands to reason that if it succeeds in making mosquito control easy and cheap enough, it could have a lucrative offering on its hands: Many governments and businesses around the globe might be glad to pay for a solution to their mosquito problems.

In the arid climate of California's Central Valley, *A. aegypti* are detested for their vicious bite. But there, at least, they don't typically transmit disease. Other places aren't so lucky. The mosquito species is among the world's deadliest, spreading diseases such as dengue fever and chikungunya in the tropics and subtropics. The diseases its bite carries kill tens of thousands of people every year and infect millions more. Releasing Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes into the wild may eventually wipe out entire populations of deadly mosquitoes and the diseases they carry.

At least that's the plan if the field tests pan out in California. Every morning during mosquito season—which runs from April to November—the van, emblazoned with “Debug Fresno,” cruises through leafy housing tracks full of multistory homes. At predetermined locations, an algorithm automatically releases carefully calculated numbers of mosquitoes, counting each individual insect with the help of a laser as it exits the van.

As the efforts to wipe out mosquito-borne diseases have ramped up, a few different approaches to the problem have emerged. Bill Gates alone has pledged more than \$1 billion for technologies that may help wipe out malaria, including controversial efforts to [genetically modify mosquitoes](#).

Verily's approach relies on a variation of a very old strategy known as sterile insect technique, in which a population is gradually killed off by interfering with the ability to reproduce.

It's unclear what would happen if the world's disease-causing mosquitoes were done away with. The ecological role that mosquitoes play hasn't been thoroughly studied, though some scientists suggest we might be just fine without them. But it's clear that *A. aegypti* has no business in Fresno County. Native to warmer, wetter climes, no one knows where they came from when they first showed up in 2013. All that's certain is that they have spread extremely rapidly.

"After we detected it, we did a massive and extensive effort to prevent the mosquito from establishing and eliminate it," says Jodi Holeman, the scientific services director for Fresno County's Consolidated Mosquito Abatement District. "We were not successful, in any way, shape, or form."

The county went from having not much of a mosquito problem at all to having one that made residents avoid their backyards and porches. Unlike most mosquitoes, *A. aegypti* lives and breeds in places inhabited by people, laying its eggs in, say, the few droplets of stagnant water at the bottom of a wine glass left on a balcony, then hiding under beds and in closets, biting legs and ankles. This makes it much harder to fight. Going door-to-door and begging residents to dump out standing water wasn't cutting it, so in 2016, Fresno teamed up with a scientist named Stephen Dobson and his company, [MosquitoMate](#).

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Scientists Freak Out Over Pandemic Potential Of Genetically Engineered Smallpox

The fact that 300 million people have died from Smallpox was not enough to stop Technocrat scientists from using CRISPR DNA editing technology to bioengineer the killer virus - and then tell the world how they did it! Again, Technocrat scientists invent because they can, not because there is any good reason to do so. □ TN Editor

Following the release of a paper earlier this year which describes how researchers stitched together segments of DNA in order to revive [horsepox](#) - a previously eradicated virus, scientists have been flipping out over the possibility that bad actors may use the study as a blueprint to revive smallpox.

The disease killed an estimated **300 million people** before the World Health Organization deemed it eradicated following a long vaccination campaign. Thus, the publication of a method for reviving a closely related disease has understandably raised some red flags within the scientific community, reports futurism.com.

*Critics [argue that](#) the paper **not only demonstrates that you can synthesize a deadly pathogen for what Science reported was about US\$100,000 in lab expenses, but even provides a slightly-too-detailed-for-comfort overview of how to do it.***

Some of the horsepox scientists' coworkers are still pretty upset about this. PLOS One's sister Journal, PLOS Pathogens, just published [three opinion pieces](#) about the whole flap, as well as [a rebuttal](#) by the Canadian professors.

Overall, everyone's pretty polite. But you get the sense that microbiologists are really, really worried about someone reviving smallpox. -futurism.com

Prior to its eradication, smallpox was primarily spread by direct and fairly prolonged face-to-face contact between people. Once the first sores appeared in the mouth and throat (the early rash stage), they were contagious until the last smallpox scab fell off. According to the CDC, "these scabs and the fluid found in the patient's sores also contained the variola virus. The virus can spread through these materials or through the objects contaminated by them, such as bedding or clothing. People who cared for smallpox patients and washed their bedding or clothing had to wear gloves and take care to not get infected."

What would a smallpox bioterror attack look like? Via the [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov):

Most likely, if smallpox is released into the United States as a bioterrorist attack, public health authorities will find out once the first person sick with the disease goes to a hospital for treatment of an unknown illness. Doctors will examine the person and use tools developed by CDC to figure out if the person's signs and symptoms are similar to those of smallpox. If doctors suspect the person has smallpox, they will care for the person and isolate them in the hospital so that

others do not come in contact with the smallpox virus. The medical staff at the hospital will contact local public health authorities to let them know they have a patient who might have smallpox.

Local public health authorities would then alert public health officials at the state and federal level, such as CDC, to help diagnose the disease. If experts confirm the illness is smallpox, then CDC, along with state and local public health authorities, will put into place their plans to respond to a bioterrorist attack with smallpox.

Kevin Esvelt, a biochemist at MIT, wrote on Thursday that **the threat is so significant that “it may be wise to begin encouraging norms of caution among authors, peer reviewers, editors, and journalists.”**

At present, we decidedly err on the side of spreading all information.

Despite entirely predictable advances in DNA assembly, every human with an internet connection can access the genetic blueprints of viruses that might kill millions.

These and worse hazards are conveniently summarized by certain Wikipedia articles, which helpfully cite technical literature relevant to misuse.

Note the deliberate absence of citations in the above paragraph. Citing or linking to already public information hazards may seem nearly harmless, but each instance contributes to a tragedy of the commons in which truly dangerous technical details become readily accessible to everyone.

Given that it takes just one well-meaning scientist to irretrievably release a technological information hazard from the metaphorical bottle, it may be wise to begin encouraging norms of caution among authors, peer reviewers, editors, and journalists. -[PLOS](#)

Esvelt blamed the media for amplifying the negative potential of smallpox synthesis as well:

DNA synthesis is becoming accessible to a wide variety of people, and the instructions for doing nasty things are freely available online.

In the horsepox study, for instance, the information hazard is partly in the paper and the methods they described.

But it's also in the media covering it and highlighting that something bad can be done. And this is worsened by the people who are alarmed, because we talk to journalists about the potential harm, and that just feeds into it. -[MIT News](#)

The Canadian professors, meanwhile, shot back at their critics - arguing that smallpox was bound to be synthesized at some point anyway.

Realistically all attempts to oppose technological advances have failed over centuries.

We suggest that one should instead focus on regulating the products of these technologies while educating people of the need to plan mitigating strategies based upon a sound understanding of the risks that such work might pose.

In these discussions, a long-term perspective is essential. -[PLOS](#)

In short, prepare for the Jurassic Park of deadly pathogens and their pandemic potential.

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Autonomous Killer Robot Makes Debut Hunting Lionfish To Save Coral Reefs

While man-made global warming is always blamed for decay of the world's coral reefs, the lionfish has emerged as a co-conspirator. The Technocrat solution is to invent an autonomous AI killer robot to hunt and kill lionfish. If they can hunt and kill one species, can they not do the same for another (ie, humans) Other scientists are looking to use CRISPR technology to genetically edit coral. □ TN Editor

Usually animal preservation is a passive effort, creating protected zones or taking other measures to protect plants and animals from humans. But scientists and students at the Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts want to help protect coral reefs from an invasive species in a more aggressive fashion: They're building a robot designed to autonomously hunt for and harvest [lionfish](#) threatening coral reefs.



Lionfish

Lionfish have threatened coral reefs off American and Caribbean coasts for years. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [describes them](#) as “flexible predators potentially capable of reducing the abundance of a wide variety of native reef-associated fishes.”

Native to the Indo-Pacific and Middle East, lionfish have distinctive features which make them prized aquarium pets. After likely being dumped into the Atlantic by owners who no longer value them, their eggs have the Gulf Stream southbound to allowing them to become vicious predators amidst shrimp, small crabs, Nassau grouper and yellowtail snapper, just to name a few species who have come under attack.

Their style of attack is unique to their newfound waters. Lionfish have hollow bones in their dorsal and pectoral fins which they inject with toxins. Whipping their fins towards a target, NOAA estimates that they’ve created a diet of around 40 species.

That’s where the robots come in.

“The goal is to be able to toss the robot over the side of a boat and have it go down to the reef, plot out a course, and begin its search,” says Craig Putnam, a senior instructor in computer science at WPI, in a [press statement](#). “It needs to set up a search pattern and fly along the reef, and not run into it, while looking for the lionfish. The idea is that the robots could be part of the environmental solution.”

A fish-hunting robot has many complex requirements. When designing a robot to hunt one specific fish, getting the identification process right is crucial. The robotic hunter needs to be able to distinguish lionfish from other fish within the reef ecosystem to choose the right target. Ideally, coral reefs are busy and flourishing environments full of sight and sound. The robot needs to cut down a tremendous amount of noise to find its target.

That training comes from machine learning. The students at WPI showed their robot thousands of pictures of lionfish of different colors, taken from different angles and with varying lighting conditions, training it to recognize a lionfish with greater than 95 percent accuracy. The robot also got pictures of human divers in order to train it in what not to absolutely avoid shooting.

The robot will use a revolving carousel that WPI compares to the cylinder of a revolver, it will hold eight detachable spear tips. A motorized mechanism will thrust the spear's tip into the fish body. When this mechanized shaft retracts, it will leave the spear tip within the fish's body and the carousel will move on.

When operating with mechanized attack systems like this, buoyancy suffers. The WPI students working on the robot as a Major Qualifying Project (MQP) decided to compensate for this through a watertight, air-filled chamber that enlarges slightly after each spearing.

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Half Earth: Empty Half The Earth Of Its Humans, Drive Into Smart Cities

The radically extreme agenda of Technocracy is so radical that most people cannot wrap their head around the reality of it. You cannot make this stuff up! However, these radical Technocrats are the people with the most power and influence throughout the world. □ TN Editor

Discussing cities is like talking about the knots in a net: they're crucial, but they're only one part of the larger story of the net and what it's supposed to do. It makes little sense to talk about knots in isolation when it's the net that matters.

Cities are part of the system we've invented to keep people alive on Earth. People tend to like cities, and have been congregating in them ever since the invention of agriculture, 10,000 or so years ago. That's why we call it civilisation. This origin story underlines how agriculture made cities possible, by providing enough food to feed a settled crowd on a regular basis. Cities can't work without farms, nor without watersheds that provide their water. So as central as cities are to modern civilisation, they are only one aspect of a system.

There are nearly eight billion humans alive on the planet now, and that's a big number: more than twice as many as were alive 50 years ago. It's an accidental experiment with enormous stakes, as it isn't clear that the Earth's biosphere can supply that many people's needs - or absorb that many wastes and poisons - on a renewable and sustainable basis over the long haul. We'll only find out by trying it.

Right now we are not succeeding. The [Global Footprint Network](#) estimates that we use up our annual supply of renewable resources by August every year, after which we are cutting into non-renewable supplies - in effect stealing from future generations. Eating the seed corn, they used to call it. At the same time we're pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at a rate that is changing the climate in dangerous ways and will certainly damage agriculture.

This situation can't endure for long - years, perhaps, but not decades. The future is radically unknowable: it could hold anything from an age of peaceful prosperity to a horrific mass-extinction event. The sheer breadth of possibility is disorienting and even stunning. But one thing can be said for sure: what can't happen won't happen. Since the current situation is unsustainable, things are certain to change.

Cities emerge from the confusion of possibilities as beacons of hope. By definition they house a lot of people on small patches of land, which makes them hugely better than suburbia. In ecological terms, suburbs are disastrous, while cities can perhaps work.



The tendency of people to move to cities, either out of desire or perceived necessity, creates a great opportunity. If we managed urbanisation properly, we could nearly remove ourselves from a considerable percentage of the the planet's surface. That would be good for many of the threatened species we share this planet with, which in turn would be good for us, because we are completely enmeshed in

Earth's web of life.

Here I'm referring to the plan EO Wilson has named [Half Earth](#). His book of the same title is provocative in all the best ways, and I think it has been under-discussed because the central idea seems so extreme. But since people are leaving the land anyway and streaming into cities, the Half Earth concept can help us to orient that process, and dodge the sixth great mass extinction event that we are now starting, and which will hammer humans too.

The idea is right there in the name: leave about half the Earth's surface mostly free of humans, so wild plants and animals can live there unimpeded as they did for so long before humans arrived. Same with the oceans, by the way; about a third of our food comes from the sea, so the seas have to be healthy too.

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Humanzees: The Push To Make Human-Chimp Hybrids

Technocrats of all stripes have such a low view of humanity that there are no boundaries in tinkering with genetic restructuring just for the thrill of doing so. This is ultimately based on the religion of Scientism which posits that all truth is exclusively discovered through science. □
TN Editor

[In a long article](#) adapted from a chapter in his forthcoming book, psychologist David Barash proposes that society should sanction the making of human-chimp hybrids. He refers to this new creature as a “humanzee” and says that “making it would be a terrific idea.”

Barash recognizes some of the scientific challenges to making a humanzee but claims that it is “by no means impossible or even unlikely that a hybrid or a chimera combining a human being and a chimpanzee could be produced in a laboratory. After all, human and chimp (or bonobo) share, by most estimates, roughly 99 percent of their nuclear DNA.”

His main argument for pursuing the creation of a human-chimp hybrid is based on the belief that humans have an unwarranted belief that we are special creatures. As Barash puts it, “Moreover, I propose that the fundamental take-home message of such creation would be to drive a stake into the heart of that destructive disinformation campaign of discontinuity, of human hegemony over all other living things.”

This argumentation claims that the dehumanization of others, what we call racism, is allowed because we’ve provided an empty space between the value of humans and the lesser value of animals. Close that gap, Barash believes, and racism will truly begin to be wiped out.

However, he does acknowledge the potential for humans, viewing the hybrids as less than human, to abuse the humanzee. But, and allowing his scary utilitarian roots to show, Barash then quickly writes, “This is possible, but it is at least arguable that the ultimate benefit of teaching

human beings their true nature would be worth the sacrifice paid by a few unfortunates.”

Pushing back on the potential for abuse, he posits that some hybrids could be “delighted by her ability to [write poetry or program a computer] while swinging from a tree branch.”

“And—more important,” he writes, “for any human being currently insistent upon his or her species’ specialness, to the ultimate detriment of literally millions of other individuals of millions of other species, such a development could well be a real mind expander and paradigm buster.”

Ultimately, what Barash is after is the erasure of the uniqueness of human personhood. His argument for the making of a human-chimp hybrid is built on his rejection of any real distinctions between humanity and the rest of the animal kingdom. He wants science to take the animal with the DNA that best matches human DNA and erase the distinction.

It should be noted that Barash’s anthropology stands in direct defiance to the Bible’s anthropology.

The Bible’s anthropology reveals to us that God made humans in His image. Genesis 1:26 reveals, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

The irony is that anti-theists are standing on a very tiny ledge (a tiny ledge, frankly, that may actually be non-existent) whenever they trumpet that racism, misogyny, and other attempts at dehumanizing others is wrong. If all that remains in the world is power, winners and losers, and no transcendent morality exists, then what’s stopping those in power from doing whatever they want to those who are not in power?

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Scientists: Man-Made DNA To Create Semi-Synthetic Strain Of Bacteria

There is no ethical debate taking place in public view that argues the case against using synthetic DNA to create life-forms not found in nature. In our opinion, it is patently insane because once established in a gene strain, it becomes permanent and thus replicates indefinitely. What is the impact on other life forms, including humans? Nobody can possibly know. □ TN Editor

Scientists are expanding the genetic code of life, using man-made DNA to create a semi-synthetic strain of bacteria — and new research shows those altered microbes actually worked to produce proteins unlike those found in nature.

It's a step toward designer drug development.

One of the first lessons in high school biology: All life is made up of four DNA building blocks known by the letters A, T, C and G. Paired together,

they form DNA's ladder-like rungs. Now there's a new rung on that ladder.

A team at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, expanded the genetic alphabet, creating two artificial DNA "letters" called X and Y. A few years ago, the researchers brewed up a type of E. coli bacteria commonly used for lab research that contained both natural DNA and this new artificial base pair — storing extra genetic information inside cells.

The next challenge: Normal DNA contains the coding for cells to form proteins that do the work of life. Could cells carrying this weird genomic hybrid work the same way?

Sure enough, the altered cells glowed green as they produced a fluorescent protein containing unnatural amino acids, researchers reported Wednesday in the journal Nature.

"We can make proteins that are built of more things than they normally are," explained Scripps chemist Floyd Romesberg, who leads the project.

While programming the green germs offered evidence that the approach can work, eventually "we would like to get proteins that do new things," he said.

That's an ultimate goal in the field of synthetic biology — designing organisms that work differently from the way nature intended so scientists can harness them to create designer drugs, biofuels or a range of other products. Scripps' technology has been licensed by a biotech company Romesberg co-founded, Synthorx Inc., that aims to make novel protein-based drugs.

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DARPA Invests \$100 Million In Genetic Extinction Technologies

DARPA invests capital into private enterprise with the sole intent of harvesting new technology that can be militarized and weaponized for the purpose of warfare. In this case, applying extinction technology to insects is theoretically transferrable to any other species as well. □ TN Editor

A US military agency is investing \$100m in genetic extinction technologies that could wipe out malarial mosquitoes, invasive rodents or other species, emails released under freedom of information rules show.

The documents suggest that the US's secretive Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (Darpa) has become the world's largest funder of "gene drive" research and will raise tensions ahead of [a UN expert committee meeting](#) in Montreal beginning on Tuesday.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is debating whether to impose a moratorium on the gene research next year and several southern countries fear a possible military application.

UN diplomats confirmed that the new email release would worsen the “bad name” of gene drives in some circles. “Many countries [will] have concerns when this technology comes from Darpa, a US military science agency,” one said.

The use of genetic extinction technologies in bioweapons is the stuff of nightmares, but known research is focused entirely on pest control and eradication.

Cutting-edge gene editing tools such as [Crispr-Cas9](#) work by using a synthetic ribonucleic acid (RNA) to cut into DNA strands and then insert, alter or remove targeted traits. These might, for example, distort the sex-ratio of mosquitoes to effectively wipe out malarial populations.

Some UN experts, though, worry about unintended consequences. One told the Guardian: “You may be able to remove viruses or the entire mosquito population, but that may also have downstream ecological effects on species that depend on them.”

“My main worry,” he added, “is that we do something irreversible to the environment, despite our good intentions, before we fully appreciate the way that this technology will work.”

Jim Thomas, a co-director of [the ETC group](#) which obtained the emails, said the US military influence they revealed would strengthen the case for a ban.

“The dual use nature of altering and eradicating entire populations is as much a threat to peace and food security as it is a threat to ecosystems,” he said. “Militarisation of gene drive funding may even contravene the [Enmod convention](#) against hostile uses of environmental modification technologies.”

Todd Kuiken, who has worked with the [GBIRD](#) programme, which receives \$6.4m from Darpa, said that the US military’s centrality to gene

tech funding meant that “researchers who depend on grants for their research may reorient their projects to fit the narrow aims of these military agencies”.

Between 2008 and 2014, the US government [spent](#) about \$820m on synthetic biology. Since 2012, most of this has come from Darpa and other military agencies, [Kuiken says](#).

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California Ranchers Rebel As 1.8 Million Acres Set Aside For... Frogs?

This is an example of Reflexive Law being applied, which I explained in Chapter 7 of *Technocracy Rising: The Trojan Horse of Global*

Transformation. This whole twisted mess started when the radical Center for Biological Diversity (based in Tucson, Arizona) sued the state of California for alleged abuses that endangered a native frog, that required the U.S. Fish & Wildlife to intervene and sequester huge tracks of land. In the meantime, the ranchers are being forced to comply with regulations that they had no part in creating in the first place. □ TN Editor

Tiny frogs and toads used to swarm over the Sierra Nevada. Now, the government says nearly 2 million acres of land needs to be preserved to prevent them from going extinct.

California ranchers and logging groups say those protections are hurting their ability to make a living. So another conflict over the Endangered Species Act is going to court.

The California Farm Bureau and two ranchers' associations sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Monday, challenging a year-old decision to designate more than 1.8 million acres of rural California as "critical habitat" for three species of frogs and toads that are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Loggers and ranchers who harvest timber or graze cattle on public lands worry the new restrictions on land use will eventually make it more difficult - if not impossible - to make a living in the Sierra, said Shaun Crook, a Tuolumne County cattle rancher whose family also owns a logging company.

"It has the economic impact of putting you out of business is what that reality could be," said Crook, president of the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau.

Even though the designation was made a year ago, Crook said federal officials haven't yet told him how the protections will affect his cattle, which graze on federal lands. But he said he and other ranchers worry that major tracts of land will be put off limits or they'll be required to install fencing around protected areas.

The case affects a wide swath of the Sierra Nevada region, from Lassen to Inyo counties. It includes portions of Placer and El Dorado counties.

Most of the land is owned by the government and is in designated wilderness areas, where the “highest level of conservation protection” on federal land is required, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The critical habitat designation subjects farmers “to substantial regulatory burdens that impose, among other things, study costs, risk assessments, mitigation fees, operational changes, permit fees, and consulting expenses,” said the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. “In some cases, these burdens put the rancher’s livelihood at risk.” The farm groups are represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, a Sacramento nonprofit that fights for conservative and property-rights causes.

At issue is the fate of the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and mountain yellow-legged frog, named for the yellow on the undersides of their legs and abdomens. The third species is the Yosemite toad, named for the national park where it was first discovered.

Both yellow-legged frogs were listed as “endangered ” while the Yosemite toad was listed as “threatened” in 2014 under the Endangered Species Act. Designation of critical habitat is typically the final step in the process of officially listing an animal as endangered.