

# CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

*Because life is good.*

## 7 BILLION AND COUNTING

Starting a conversation about the impacts of human population growth on plant and animal species survival can be difficult. These talking points can help you take action.

The global population is projected to reach 7 billion by the end of October 2011 and 9 billion by 2050. Without efforts to make birth control widely available, it could reach as high as 15 billion — far beyond the Earth's carrying capacity.

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

The United States has by far 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 original 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 publication of *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich in 1968, the best-selling ecology book of the 1960s, was a major catalyst for the original Earth Day and the subsequent birth of the modern environmental movement.

The Center for Biological Diversity has handed out more than 350,000 free condoms since the Endangered Species Condom project began, relying on thousands of volunteers across the 50 states as our distributors. We're handing out 100,000 more in 2011 to highlight the world's population hitting 7 billion.

The condoms are designed to draw attention to the well-documented — but little discussed — correlation between unsustainable human population growth and the decline and extinction of many 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 percent of all pregnancies in the world — and nearly 50 percent of all 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 would provide a crucial means of reducing unsustainable fertility rates.

Other key factors in stabilizing population growth involve the education and empowerment of women to choose when and how many children they have. By supporting policies and local initiatives to help women continue to have access to 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.*

The most important action you can take is to talk about this issue with your friends, family and community. Taboos around discussing family planning play a major role in preventing crucial social progress toward curbing the population explosion.

Our website, [www.7BillionAndCounting.org](http://www.7BillionAndCounting.org), is a great place for reading up more on this issue. Contact Amy Harwood at (520) 623-5252 x 313 or [aharwood@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:aharwood@biologicaldiversity.org).



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