

April 21, 2014

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

Earth Day: Now With 95 Percent More People!

Stephanie Feldstein
Population and Sustainability Director,
Center for Biological Diversity

Forty-four years ago, students, activists and political leaders looked at the impact human population was having on the world around them and decided something needed to be done. Earth Day was born, and the modern environmental movement wasn't far behind.

Since then, there have been a lot more births. Billions more. In the 44 years since the first Earth Day, our population has increased by nearly 95 percent (and we still add 227,000 people to the planet each day).

That's more people using more land and water, eating more meat, paving more wild places, demanding more energy and producing more climate-changing emissions. More cars and more consumerism; more trash and more pollution.

The one thing we don't have more of: Earth

We still only have one planet. Though you wouldn't know it by the way we live our lives, especially here in the U.S. In fact, if everyone in the world lived like Americans, it would take 4.4 Earths to sustain the planet. Unfortunately, among all those Earth Day sales for yard accessories, eco-friendly t-shirts and other mass-produced "green" products, you won't find a single spare Earth on clearance.

There are a few things this Earth Day has less of than the first celebration 44 years ago. Most notably absent are the conversations about our runaway population growth and overconsumption, what it's doing to wildlife and the environment, and what we need to do about it if we're really going to save the planet... and ourselves.

It's time to go retro on Earth Day. There were 3.7 billion people on the planet for the first Earth Day in 1970, and one of the biggest concerns then was that our growing population was destroying the planet and driving other species to extinction. Now that we have 7.2 billion people on the planet, the one thing we need more of is concern about human population and the extinction crisis.

The Center for Biological Diversity is bringing population back to Earth Day this year by giving away 44,000 Endangered Species Condoms in honor of the 44th anniversary of the celebration. More than 500 volunteers across all 50 states will be bringing the condoms to Earth Day festivals, parties and other community events to get more people talking about the issue that inspired the original Earth Day.

Doing your part is even easier than remembering to bring your reusable tote bag to the grocery store. Start by having the conversation. Share this blog post and the video below. Join us on Facebook. Sign up to be an Endangered Species Condoms volunteer. Check out our

Earth Day Event Toolkit for information and downloadable fact sheets. Write a letter to the editor. Next time your friends and family are talking about organic food, climate change or their other favorite environmental issue, add population growth to mix.

We can't create more Earth by the next Earth Day, but we can raise more awareness about population growth and commit to leaving more room for wildlife.