

Happy Earth Day! Four messages everyone needs to hear and understand

By Wayne Visser

🌍 Happy Earth Day! 🌍 Here are 4 messages everyone needs to hear and understand: 1) The Earth is chronically ill, 2) The Earth is incredibly resilient, and 3) The Earth doesn't need saving, 4) The Earth thrives when we care. Allow me unpack these briefly.

😞 The Earth is chronically ill 😞 >> The disease is a cancer in which some cells go rogue and destroy those around them, ultimately killing the body that they are part of. We are the disease. Humanity is the cancer. Ever since we became sapiens--which ironically means "wise"--we have been wiping out other species. And since the start of the Industrial Revolution, we have been poisoning the air and water, depleting resources and eroding ecosystems. But we--those millions of us who are fighting to protect and restore nature--are also the Earth's immune system, defending it from relentless attack.

🌻 The Earth is incredibly resilient 🌻 >> This means that despite the havoc we have wreaked, despite the damage to nature, the million species that are under threat of extinction, life on Earth is persistent and fecund. As soon as we give nature a chance, as soon as we leave it alone--give it space to heal and time to recover--it bounces back, often much quicker than we might expect. This is not a reason for complacency. On the contrary, it means that every time we conserve natural areas, rewild our landscapes or nurture our gardens, we are bringing back life.

💣 The Earth doesn't need saving 💣 >> That may sound controversial, but it's just basic geoscience. The Earth will outlast humans and will recover from any damage that we do. There have been five mass extinctions before—in one case where 95% of biodiversity was lost—and each time, it has recovered. There have been ice ages and hot periods. The Earth is a self-regulating, adaptive system. What we should be more concerned about is restoring the health of the Earth's ecosystems, in order to save ourselves. We are the ones that are completely dependent on the web of life to survive.

🐘 The Earth thrives when we care 🐘 >> In case that sounds cold-hearted and selfish, there is another powerful reason to take action to protect and restore nature. Some of us--probably most of us in fact--really care. We care about the diversity of life on Earth. We care about the suffering and exploitation of animals. We care about species going extinct. We care about saving wilderness areas, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of the millions of other species that have every right to exist on this opalescent blue-green planet that we call Earth--our shared home.

On this Earth Day, you may also enjoy my poem, Letter to Earth.

My bestselling book, Thriving, is now out in paperback.

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