

This is an interesting hypothetical scenario, and I am disappointed that no one has yet explored it. This may be in part due to “morals” or “ethics” but hey, I’m Evan Armstrong and I do not care for such trivialities.

Let us explore the feasibility of systematically destroying certain ecosystems to reduce emissions and buy time. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, this slide deck is all about answering controversial or unheard of questions, and this particular one meets both criteria.

Now, to start off, let’s recap the dire situation:

Emissions are rising, the world is threatened, and scientists spend every other day saying we’re all doomed. The reefs are disappearing and coral is dying, while fish choke and Russia acidifies their oceans (very slowly) by dumping nuclear waste into them. Humanity needs to cut the emissions somehow, but how do they do it without destroying the economy?
In this time of crisis, humanity looks to nature, at how there are billions of animals all farting and burping, producing CO₂. It is here that humanity sees the potential to reduce emissions and buy time - just not their own emissions.

Humanity then goes around purging entire ecosystems of gaseous animal life. Does this work?

Well, human-raised animals account for about 9% of our total emissions, so purging them wouldn’t be enough to solve the issue. However, many estimates say (<https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/how-many-animals-are-there-in-the-world>) that there are around 20 quintillion animals on the planet (including insects and the like). Our collective meat industry possesses about 20.5 billion creatures, and with such a large and varied pool of wild animals that exist killing about 100 billion of them - about four times our current supply of domesticated animals, resulting in a net drop equal to about 36% of human emissions, assuming that they’re of the same size and produce the same amount of gas - could indeed save the planet.

As for feasibility, while personally killing each of the 100 billion similar-sized animals we need to murder would take a while, we can do much more with systematic ecosystem destruction: the removal of specific, crucial species intended to cause a domino effect and wipe the whole thing out, achieving maximum emissions reduction.

We can do either that or take the shotgun approach and just napalm everything, Vietnam style, though not only would that produce a lot more emissions short term it would also kill plants, and the entire goal of this is to maintain the plant-life while removing the animal life that surrounds it.

Hmmm..... love the smell of ecological devastation in the mornin’.....

Pictured: Who needs Hippos when you have Zippos?



As to arguments against this course of action, well, there are a few. Considering what the resolution is I 'd be surprised if there weren't.

First off we have the argument that it could adversely affect the ecosystem and biodiversity, though this point somewhat fails considering ecosystems are often isolated things (the limited ranges of different species show this) and the whole point is to affect biodiversity.

Secondly, we have the point that the reduction in biodiversity and animal life could constitute a mass-extinction event and could have potentially devastating effects to human life as things that provide basic functions to human life are destroyed (earthworms, bees, etc). I would like to respond by saying both those crucial animals rely on plants entirely and if we only kill animals that don't provide an essential service or who aggressively destroy plant-life then we might be able to keep the basic ecosystem functioning. However, while this remains viable, like any mass extinction event this would be massively unpredictable.

Though it could be time for us to green-ize our energy industry and get fusion power, enough to stabilize the carbon and methane emissions and save the rest of the ecosystem and ourselves.

Then, of course, we have the moral arguments which I will answer in either one of two ways: Either A: the sacrifice of these animals permits the rest of the world's ecosystems to live or B: Moral arguments and appeals to emotion are logical fallacies.

VERDICT: While theoretically possible, one should always be cautious when performing mass animal murder. While it might very well buy us time, we are (thankfully) not yet at the point where we need to take such drastic measures to stabilize the situation. For now, gradual solarization and continued research into fusion power will do well enough.