

# *Rights of Nature as a tool for transformational change*

Pella Thiel

Rights of Nature Sweden, End Ecocide Sweden



Harmony with Nature  
United Nations

**END [ECOCIDE]!**

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## Science & Environment

### Climate change: 12 years to save planet? Make that 18 months



**Matt McGrath**  
Environment correspondent  
@mattmcgrathbbc

24 July 2019

### Warning of 'ecological Armageddon' after dramatic plunge in insect numbers

Three-quarters of flying insects in nature reserves across Germany have vanished in 25 years, with serious implications for all life on Earth, scientists say

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# Humans are driving one million species to extinction

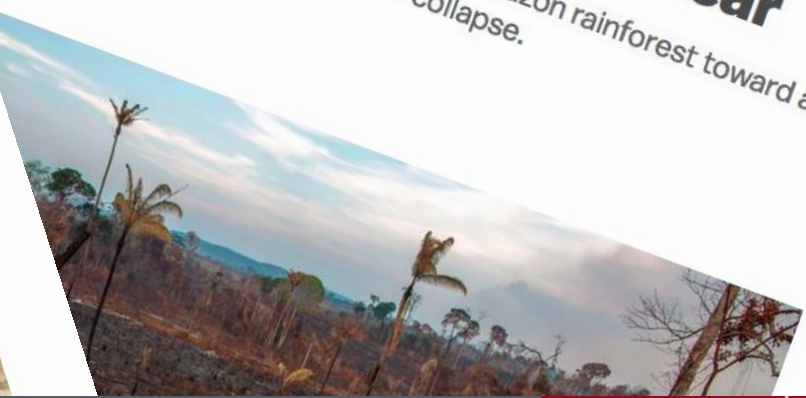
Landmark United Nations-backed report finds that agriculture is one of the biggest threats to Earth's ecosystems.

## The Amazon rainforest's worst-case scenario is uncomfortably near

Wildfires and deforestation are pushing the Amazon rainforest toward a dieback scenario: an irreversible cycle of collapse.  
By Umair Irfan | Aug 27, 2019, 11:30am EDT

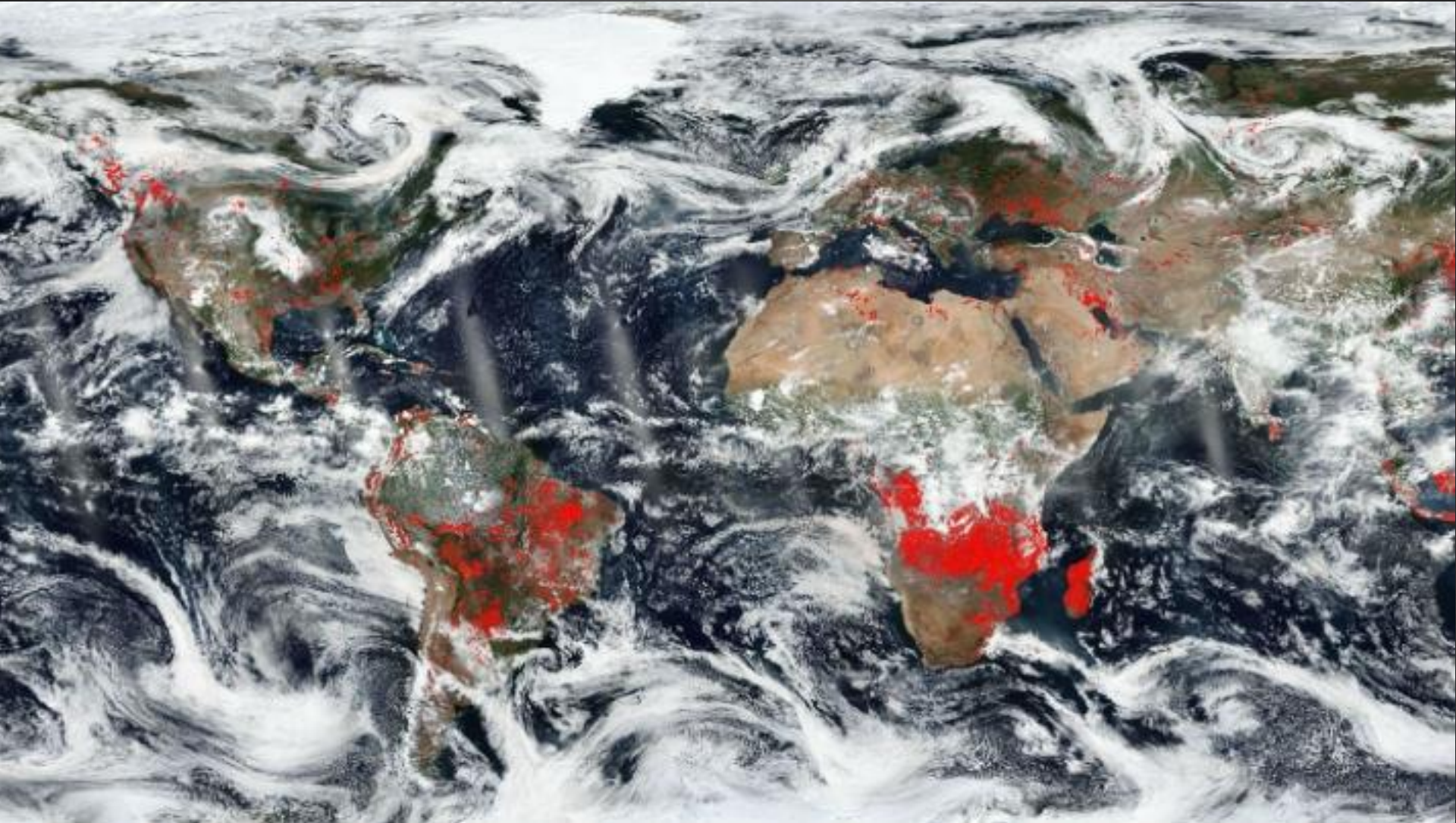


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# Earth on fire











Amazon



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PRESS RELEASE | PARIS | SEPTEMBER 7, 2018

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**WARNING: Embargoed until Monday, September 10, 2018, at 11 a.m. (New-York time) / 16 p.m. (London Time)**

## **Halting biodiversity loss: political actions are required, not additional scientific knowledge**

Over 15 years, almost 13,000 scientific papers have been published in the leading conservation science journals. Yet biodiversity remains threatened at a global scale. Two CNRS researchers have focused on this worrisome paradox by taking a deeper look at this large volume of literature. They found that one of the major problems is that decisions are usually more favorable to human activities than to nature protection. Their study appears in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* (September 10).

What are researchers doing? The sixth mass extinction continues and is even accelerating, but conservation scientists, it is claimed, have no solutions to offer. Even more worrying, the researchers would be so pessimistic that the warnings they give could be counterproductive. But is this really the case? Two CNRS researchers<sup>1</sup> have addressed this question. They examined the 12,971 research articles published during the last 15 years in the main scientific journals dedicated to conservation.



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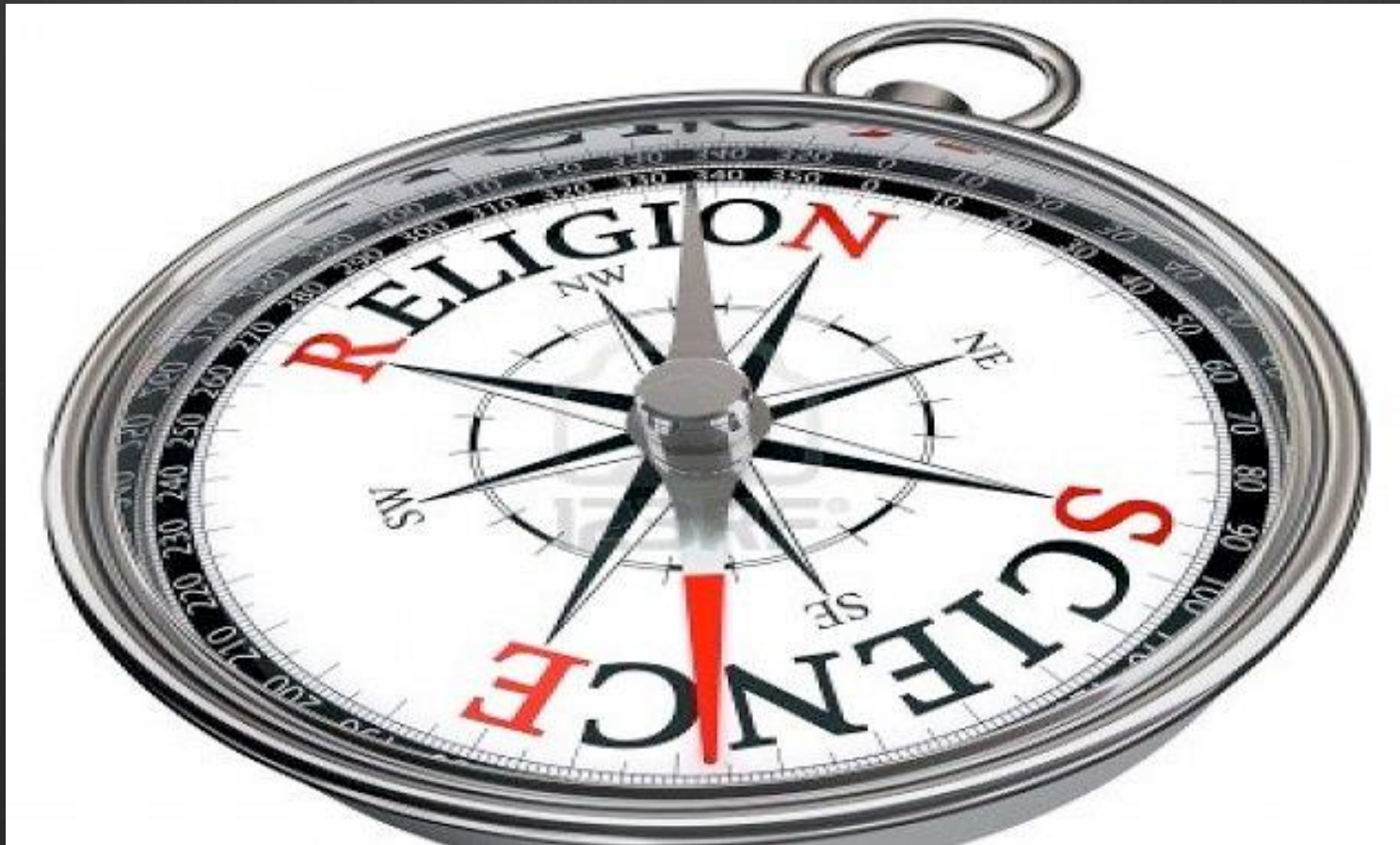


# The world is alive

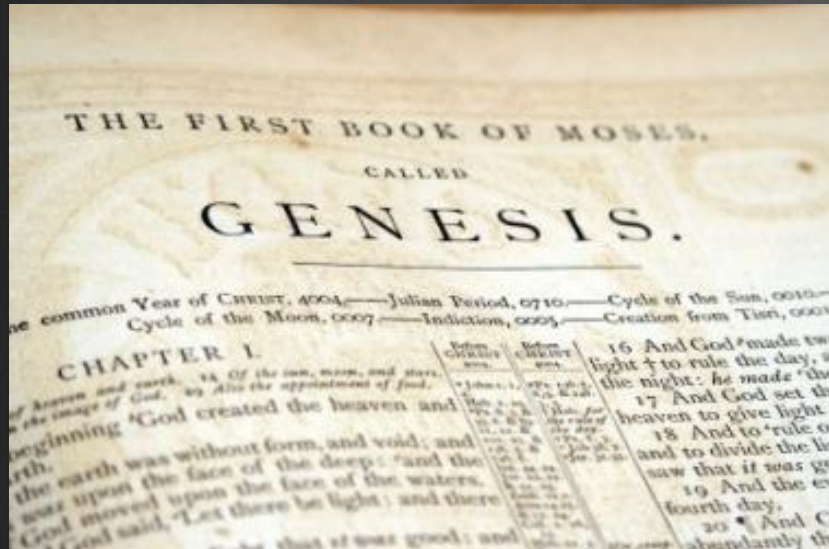


...but we built a  
civilisation on  
the idea that it  
is not





# Book of Genesis



God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

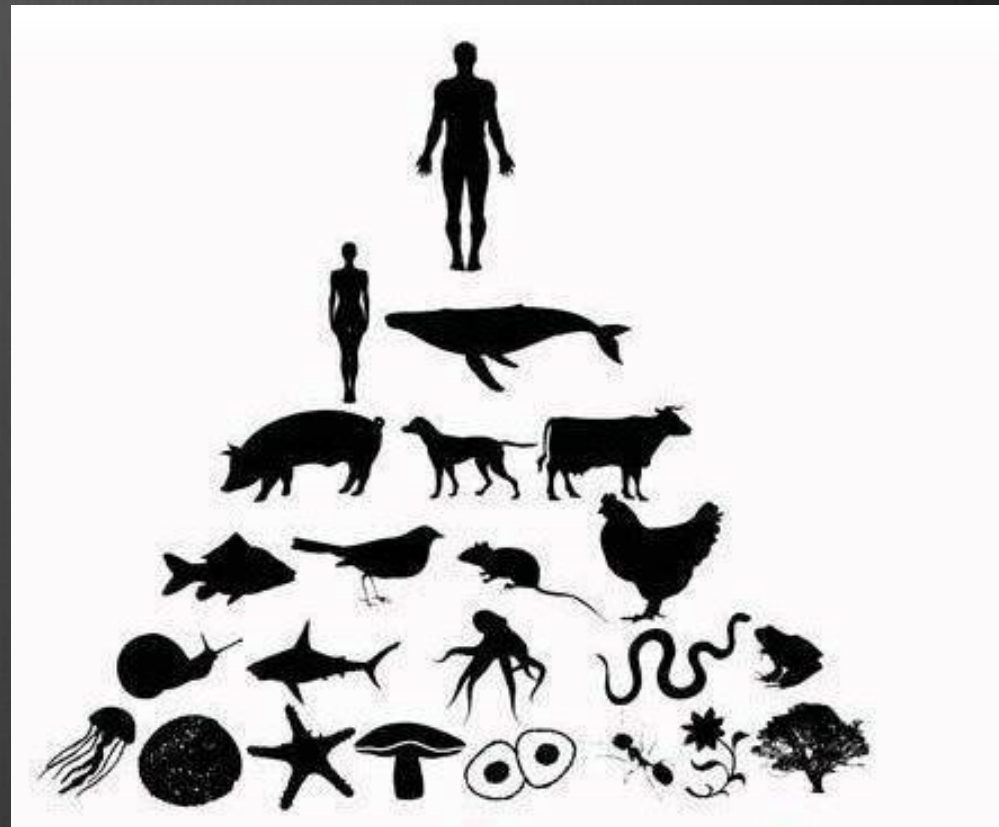




Technology “helps us to think about the secrets still locked in nature’s bosom.

...nature betrays her secrets more fully when in the grip and under the pressure of art than when in the enjoyment of her natural liberty.”

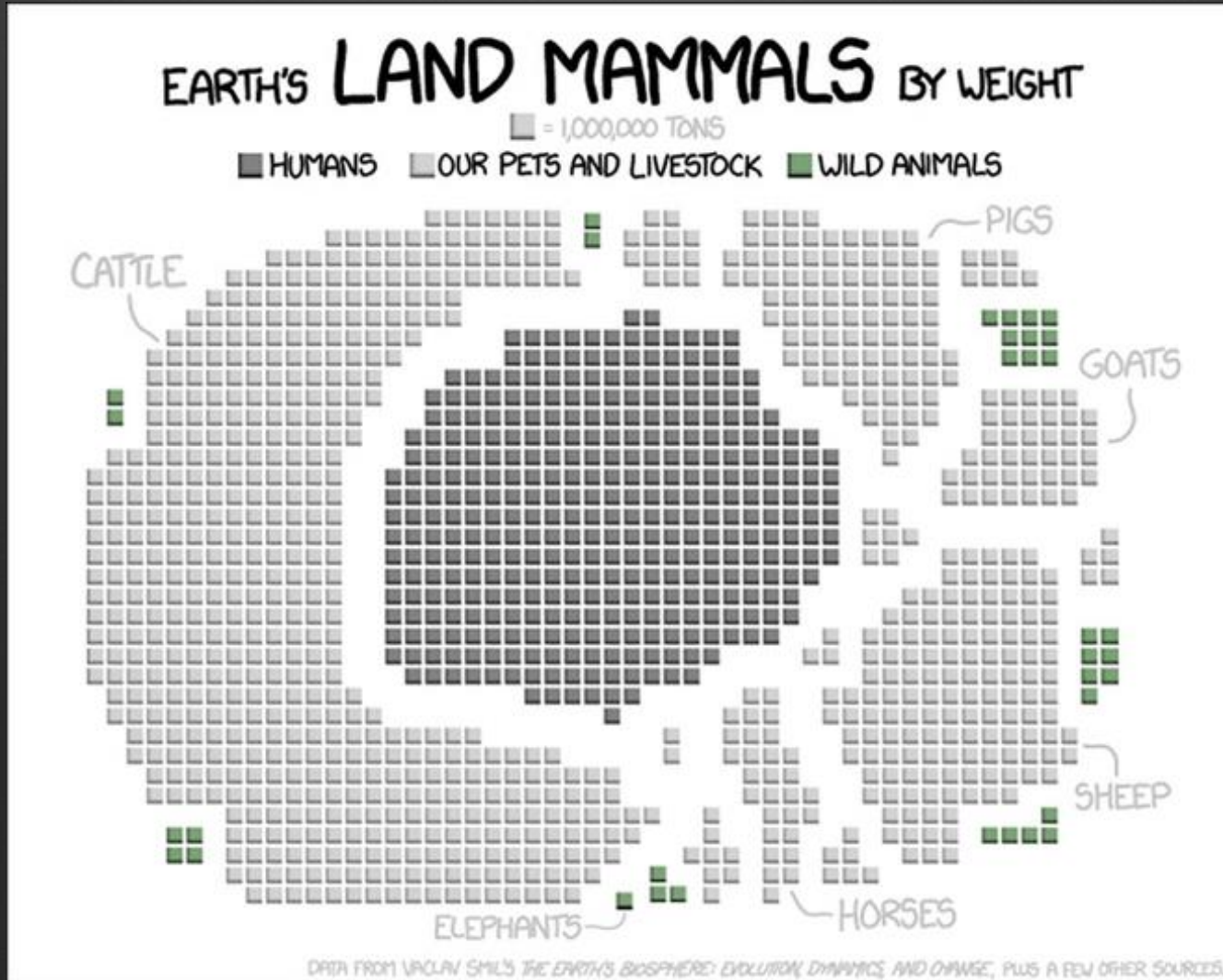
Francis Bacon







# Antropocen





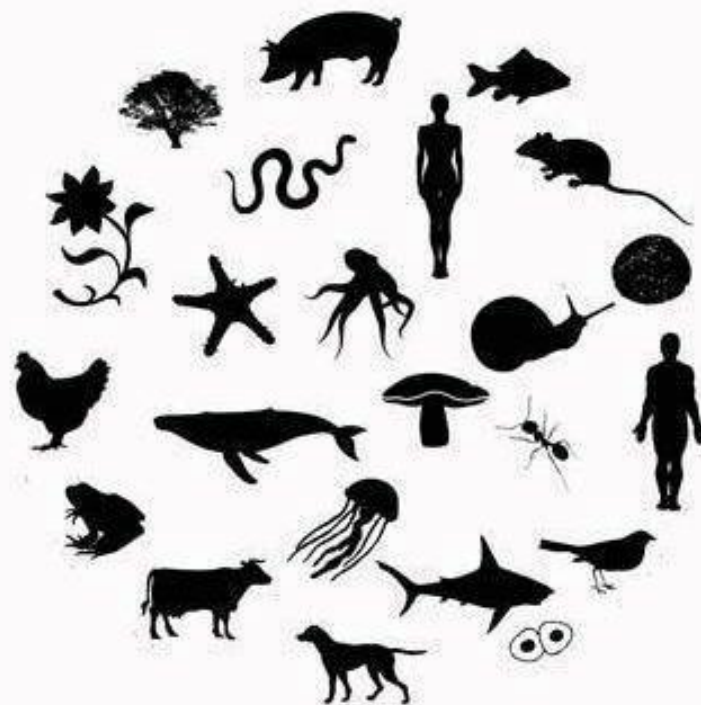
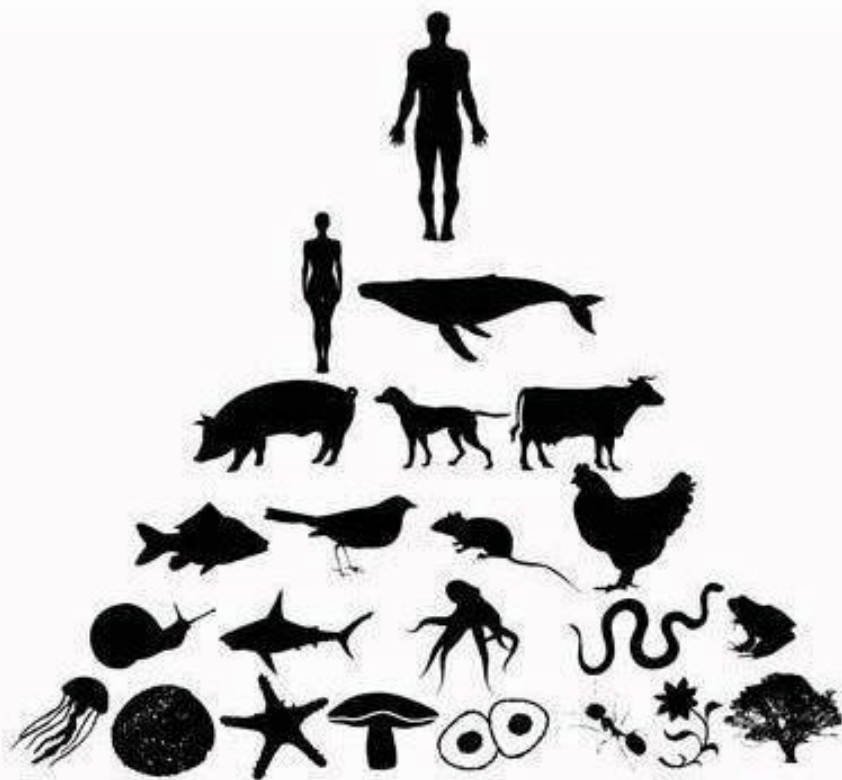


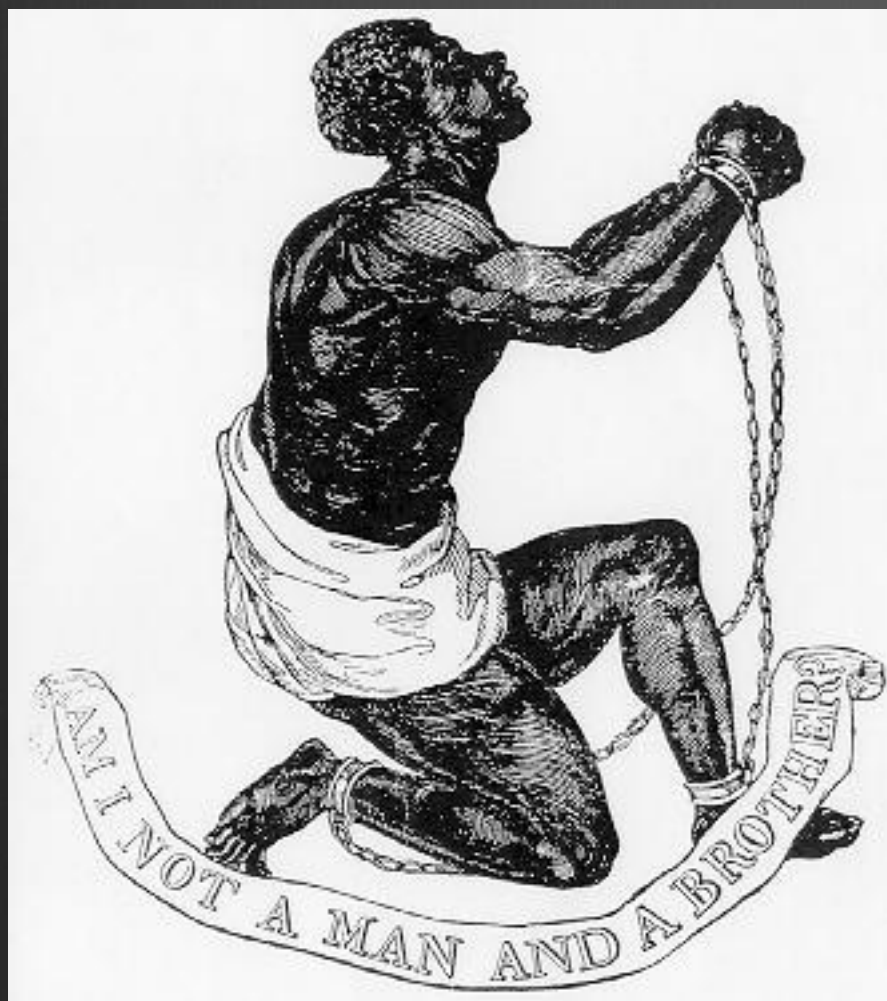


Photo Source:  
University of Southern California Website

*The fact is, that each time there is a movement to confer rights onto some new "entity", the proposal is bound to sound odd or frightening or laughable.*

Christopher D Stone: Should Trees Have Standing? (1972)





# Colorado River vs State of Colorado





# Constitution of Ecuador

## Chapter 7th: Rights for Nature

- **Art. 71.**
- ⊗ Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.
- ⊗ All persons, communities, peoples and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce the rights of nature. To enforce and interpret these rights, the principles set forth in the Constitution shall be observed, as appropriate.

# Whanganui - Te Awa Tupua



Te Awa Tupua is a **spiritual and physical entity** that supports and sustains both the life and natural resources within the Whanganui River and the health and well-being of the iwi, hapū, and other communities of the River.

Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au: I am the River and the River is me: The iwi and hapū of the Whanganui River have **an inalienable connection with, and responsibility to, Te Awa Tupua** and its health and wellbeing.

Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 No 7



# Emergent space

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graph TD; A((Río Atrato, Colombia, 2016)) --- B((Whanganui river, NZ, 2017)); B --- C(>3 dozen municipalities, USA); C --- D(Mount Taranaki, NZ, 2017); D --- E(Lake Erie, feb 2019); E --- F(?); F --- G(Amazonas, Colombia, april 2018); G --- H(Ganges and Yamuna rivers, India, 2017); H --- I(Constitution of Ecuador, 2008); I --- J(Draft Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, 2010); J --- A;
```

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Whanganui  
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Amazonas,  
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Ganges and  
Yamuna rivers,  
India, 2017

Constitution of  
Ecuador, 2008

Draft Declaration  
on the Rights of  
Mother Earth,  
2010

Sami Parliament  
of Sweden  
decides to  
support the  
**Declaration on  
the Rights of  
Mother Earth**



# Lake Erie, Ohio



## Lake Erie Bill of Rights

recognizes rights for Lake Erie to “exist, flourish, and naturally evolve”

and rights to a “clean and healthy Lake Erie and Lake Erie ecosystem” for residents of Toledo.

Accepted in a ballot Feb 26, 2019.



# What becomes possible when Rights of Nature are acknowledged?



# Permakultur-Projektplanung

## Naturhof Pramtal





# Lake Vättern as a legal subject?







# Addition to the Constitution of Sweden

**Article 26, Protection of the Natural Environment, to Chapter 2 of the Instrument of Government.**

**Art. 26.** The natural environment, including ecosystems, natural communities, and native species, shall be guaranteed the following rights:

1. the right to naturally exist, flourish, regenerate, and evolve;
2. the right to restoration, recovery, and preservation; and
3. the right to perform its natural functions.



# Wild mind



”But how do you know what a river wants?”



# The urgent need to subjectify

*Perhaps what I'm  
trying to do is to  
subjectify the world,  
because look at where  
objectifying it has gotten  
us.*

Ursula K LeGuin





Tack!

[www.naturensrattigheter.se](http://www.naturensrattigheter.se)

on Facebook:

**Like Global Alliance for  
the Rights of Nature**

**Join Naturens rättigheter i  
Sverige**



# Harmony with Nature

## United Nations

### Nine resolutions of the General Assembly on Earth Jurisprudence

*Since 2009, the aim of the General Assembly, in adopting its nine resolutions on Harmony with Nature, has been to define (a) relationship based on a non-anthropocentric relationship with Nature. The resolutions contain different perspectives regarding the construction of a new, non-anthropocentric paradigm in which the fundamental basis for right and wrong action concerning the environment is grounded not solely in human concerns.*



# Lawsuits in Ecuador

Rights of Nature vs property rights (shrimp farming)

The Court acknowledged that this reflects ‘*a biocentric vision that prioritizes Nature in contrast to the classic anthropocentric conception in which the human being is the center and measure of all things, and where Nature was considered a mere provider of resources*’

(Corte Constitucional del Ecuador, 2015, p. 10)

# Wuppertal call

In view of the forthcoming 11th assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2021 we recommend to the WCC, in particular, that it declares a “Decade for the Healing of Creation” with the following goals:

- ⊕ To promote UN processes to create a legal framework for a binding “**Universal Charter of the Rights of Mother Earth**” (Cochabamba 2010), an Earth international jurisprudence system, and explore the possibilities of a **UN Council for the Rights of Nature** and to explore **recognition of ecocide as a criminal offence** in the International Court of Justice.