

PRESS RELEASE

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BBC PRESENTER CALLS FOR POPULATION CONTROL

Leading zoologist says urgent action needed to protect the planet

To mark World Environment Day, eminent zoologist and broadcaster Professor Aubrey Manning OBE today called for politicians to tackle the challenge of population growth. He said that mankind is becoming a voracious monoculture whose growth is destroying the very biosphere it requires to survive.

The presenter of BBC's "Earth Story" series believes that the sheer number of humans on planet earth is the greatest menace the world faces. Of the many million species on the planet, humans are among just a handful whose population is increasing. Human domination comes at a long term cost to ourselves. By clearing land, draining wetlands, depleting fish stocks and warming the earth, Manning warns mankind is destroying the species that are the very foundation of our own survival.

Every day human population grows by more than 200,000 whereas other species are disappearing at more than 100 times the natural rate of extinction. Manning believes the world is already grossly overpopulated with c. 6.5 billion people, and that enabling a slow decline in population is the best way for mankind to secure its future.

Speaking today, Manning said, "Population growth is threatening mankind's long-term survival and it is time that governments woke up to that challenge. The earth is already grossly over populated and without a whole change of attitude to population growth we are condemned for ever to struggle up a down escalator.

"We live in a world that has staggering biodiversity but huge numbers of species face extinction whilst human population growth remains unchallenged. Politicians and the public have to realise that we need to stop growing for our own sake. It is only by sharing the planet with other species that we will have a long-term future.

“Population control is in the interests of mankind –it is FOR people. Our critics may accuse us of being anti-human but they are often locked in denial and refuse to recognise that we are consuming far more than we can replace. There are many other essential short-term priorities. Population reduction will not be *sufficient* but it is absolutely *necessary*. Slow decline is the only option left to us if we want a civilised and sustainable future. If not, biodiversity will continue to shrink at an accelerating pace and our descendents will be left scrabbling for diminishing resources in a damaged world whose life support systems can no longer recover.

“2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity and so what better time is there to debate these issues?”

Manning’s call for action comes as a new art show exploring population is set to open in central London. The show, featuring the work of artist Gregor Harvie, opens at the Crypt Gallery in St Pancras church on 9 June. Manning is taking part in a debate to mark the installation’s opening at the same venue on 10 June. He will be joined by speakers including the controversial Reverend Jeremy Caddick, outspoken journalist Fred Pearce, Professor John Guillebaud, Roger Martin of the Optimum Population Trust and Savina Geerinckx of Street Child Africa. BBC Radio 4 presenter Geoff Watts will host the debate.

The show by artist Gregor Harvie features fifty beautiful and compelling paintings that replicate and mutate, evolving from simple cells to complex crowds. Fifty elegies by writer Alex Harvie accompany the paintings recalling past societies whose rapid growth led to collapse, a warning for the future. For each painting sold, Gregor Harvie will donate the majority of the amount raised to Street Child Africa to enable them to offer a vulnerable child in Ghana a year’s apprenticeship including accommodation, food, medical care and support, to help lift them out of poverty.

Rupert Maas of Antiques Roadshow and the Maas Gallery said, “Primeval gods haunt the painter Gregor Harvie - Khaos, and Eros (love, the life-bringer). Spread across the fifty intense paintings of his new show, Eros has triumphed - life has proliferated so fast that Gaia is exhausted. Logic predicts that, full circle, Khaos will prevail in the future, but all we can see in The Crypt Gallery (the underworld!), where the fifty paintings are densely hung, is exponential cellular division evolving through to

teeming crowds. A glimpse of what may be the fate of all this life is given by his partner, writer Alex Harvie, in a series of elegies for past societies that have collapsed under their own weight.”

For further information please contact Alex Harvie on 07949 093 885

or email info@gandaharvie.com

Professor Aubrey Manning is available for interview.

Notes

The debate will take place in St Pancras Church on the corner of Upper Woburn Place and Euston Road, London NW1 2BA, Thursday 10 June, 6:30pm-8:00pm. Tickets are £6 and can be bought online at www.genememart.blogspot.com. You can read more about the background to the debate on Our Future Planet <http://www.ourfutureplanet.org/news/372-the-pitter-patter-of-carbon-footprints>

Artist Gregor Harvie and writer Alex Harvie have been working together delivering internationally-respected creative projects since 1998. They met working on the creation of the Millennium Dome where they contributed to the content of ten installations. Find out more at <http://www.gandaharvie.com>

Listen to Nicky Barranger of The Interview online interview artist Gregor Harvie about the GENE MEME art installation.

<http://www.theinterviewonline.co.uk/library/books/gregor-harvie-interview.aspx>