

Re: evolutionary success of humans

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.bio.evolution/2005-11/msg00353.html>

- *From:* Earle Jones <earle.jones@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 26 Nov 2005 13:05:05 -0500 (EST)
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In article <dm2s1n\$2cgt\$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, "Ron O" <rokimoto@xxxxxxx> wrote:

> pauldepstein@xxxxxxx wrote:
>> I understand that there are approximately 6 billion humans. How does
>> this compare with the total number of living mammals? Is there any
>> other mammalian species as numerous?
>>
>> I am a little bit puzzled by our evolutionary success because we have
>> an enormous number of relative disadvantages compared to other mammals.
>> Here are just a few of them.
>>
>> 1) Long gestation period.
>> 2) Almost no multiple births.
>> 3) Bad hearing.
>> 4) Poor mobility -- slow on land, and terrible at swimming and
>> climbing.
>> 5) Terrible sense of smell.
>>
>> Paul Epstein
>
> Until the development of agriculture humans were outnumbered by a lot
> of different mammals. The number of humans was probably counted in the
> millions. That should tell you something about why our numbers are so
> great at this time. It wasn't until agriculture that civilization that
> could accomodate increased population sizes came into existence that
> our population exploded.
>
> Ron Okimoto

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Jared Diamond (Guns, Germs, and Steel author) wrote that the biggest mistake ever made by man was the invention of agriculture. Ref:

The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race

By Jared Diamond
University of California at Los Angeles Medical School

Re: evolutionary success of humans

Discover Magazine, May 1987

Pages 64–66

Illustrations by Elliott Danfield

"To science we owe dramatic changes in our smug self–image. Astronomy taught us that our earth isn't the center of the universe but merely one of billions of heavenly bodies. From biology we learned that we weren't specially created by God but evolved along with millions of other species. Now archaeology is demolishing another sacred belief: that human history over the past million years has been a long tale of progress. In particular, recent discoveries suggest that the adoption of agriculture, supposedly our most decisive step toward a better life, was in many ways a catastrophe from which we have never recovered. With agriculture came the gross social and sexual inequality, the disease and despotism, that curse our existence.

At first, the evidence against this revisionist interpretation will strike twentieth century Americans as irrefutable. We're better off in almost every respect than people of the Middle Ages, who in turn had it easier than cavemen, who in turn were better off than apes. Just count our advantages. We enjoy the most abundant and varied foods, the best tools and material goods, some of the longest and healthiest lives, in history. Most of us are safe from starvation and predators. We get our energy from oil and machines, not from our sweat. What neo–Luddite among us would trade his life for that of a medieval peasant, a caveman, or an ape?

For most of our history we supported ourselves by hunting and gathering: we hunted wild animals and foraged for wild plants. It's a life that philosophers have traditionally regarded as nasty, brutish, and short. Since no food is grown and little is stored, there is (in this view) no respite from the struggle that starts anew each day to find wild foods and avoid starving. Our escape from this misery was facilitated only 10,000 years ago, when in different parts of the world people began to domesticate plants and animals. The agricultural revolution spread until today it's nearly universal and few tribes of hunter–gatherers survive."

earle

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- *Follow–Ups:*
 - ◆ *Re: evolutionary success of humans*
 - ◇ *From: JoeSP*

Re: evolutionary success of humans

- **References:**

- ◆ **evolutionary success of humans**

- ◇ *From:* pauldepstein

- ◆ **Re: evolutionary success of humans**

- ◇ *From:* Ron O

- Prev by Date: **Re: Group selected altruism – (was: Hamilton's rule)**

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