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EARTH WILL BE A WASTELAND IN JUST FIVE YEARS, SCIENTISTS WARN!

LONDON - Within a few short years - certainly within the lifetime of a child born today - humans will have completely used up Earth's precious natural resources and the whole planet will be an uninhabitable wasteland, scientists warn. Mankind has already wiped out one-third of the natural world over the last 30 years - and if the devastation keeps up at the current rate, our own species will become extinct as well unless we evacuate Earth, a chilling new study by the World Wide Fund For Nature reveals.

If human civilization continues to consume natural resources and churn out carbon dioxide at today's alarming pace, we will soon have to colonize not just one, but at least two Earth-size planets in order to survive, the ecology experts say. "Our current rate of consumption is eroding the very fabric of our planet and will ultimately threaten our long-term survival," declared Francis Sullivan, a spokes-man for the group.

The experts predict that the total evacuation of Earth will be necessary within 75 years. That means that if you're not aboard one of the rocketship "lifeboats" yourself, your children or grandchildren probably will be - if enough spaceships have been built to hold everyone.

The terrifying conclusions in the study, titled Living Planet Report,

2000, are based on the most extensive analysis ever conducted of the ongoing environmental catastrophe. Among the report's frightening findings: The yearly damage inflicted on the environment by man thanks to industrialization has increased by 50 percent since 1970 - and now far exceeds our planet's capacity for regeneration.

The Earth is undergoing the largest and most widespread mass extinction since the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million years ago, with countless animal species vanishing forever each year.

More than 10 percent of world's forests have been cut down in the last three decades. The level of carbon dioxide emissions, produced by burning fossil fuels and believed to be a major factor in the environment-killing destruction of the Earth's ozone layer, has leapt up an alarming 300 percent since 1961 - and now stands at a lung-choking four tons per person worldwide.

The world's freshwater lakes, rivers and wetlands are fast disappearing and so are fish. The experts calculate that fish are being extracted from the water at a rate that "exceeds safe biological limits" by at least a third.

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