

January 18, 2015

Turns out, according to [Wired](#), squinting actually helps us see better.

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[The Verge](#) has an article on New York City's deer problem. Deer (rats with hooves) have become a serious problem throughout the country. This piece is a bit long, but it expands its focus beyond Staten Island to the whole country.

***Just before Christmas** of last year, John Caminiti, who lives in Staten Island, New York City's least populated borough, watched traffic come to a standstill outside the Staten Island Mall. "It got quiet all of a sudden," Caminiti told me. "I look around, and there was a big buck, standing right on the fringe of the wilderness and the mall. A calm came over people."*

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Nobody really knows where the herds came from. The Staten Island Advance reported sightings as far back as 1991; according to [The New York Times](#), deer began appearing "with some frequency" around 2000.

In 2008, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation conducted a survey of Staten Island's deer population. The biologist who searched the woods estimated there were approximately 24 white-tailed deer in the borough. Last winter, the New York City Parks Department conducted an aerial, infrared survey of the island and found 793 individuals — an apparent 3,304 percent increase in just six years.

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*... **White-tailed deer are not** particularly large animals, but they are muscular and athletic, some reportedly able to jump over fences 10 feet high. The tails from which they derive their name stick up jauntily over their rears as they run away from you.*

Before European colonization, North America was home to somewhere between 24 and 33 million white-tailed deer, most widely distributed east of the Rocky Mountains. In the following centuries, that population was destroyed — first by traders operating out of coastal cities, making deals with Native Americans for pelts; then by settlers moving out West. Deer died by the hundreds of thousands as the market grew for their meat and hides.

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Then, thanks to a set of concepts and policies referred to as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, the deer made a tremendous comeback. The model, encouraged by a rising American bourgeoisie that yearned for recreational hunting, established a series of principles to promote rebounding deer populations: create protected green spaces where commercial hunting was banned; foster safe and abundant spaces for regulated, recreational hunting; and further discourage predator species that had essentially already been eradicated. The logic was simple: you can't hunt the deer if all the deer are already dead.

As a result, the United States now has over 30 million white-tailed deer, much more densely populated than they ever were before Europeans arrived. Unchecked by wolves, cougars, and bears, the herds wreak havoc: a [2012 Rutgers University study](#) alleges that white-tailed deer are responsible for most of the \$4.5 billion worth of crops that US agriculture loses to wildlife annually; they account for three to four thousand car collisions a day. New Jersey alone had 31,192 deer collisions from 2011 to 2012. Unchecked by predators or hunters, only starvation will limit population growth.

To bring a native species back from the brink of eradication should be cause for celebration — in this respect, the revival of white-tailed deer is one of the conservation movement's finest accomplishments. But our understanding of what is best for the deer, for people, and for the wider ecosystem is, perhaps, changing. And success is starting to resemble failure. ...

Kevin Williamson has some cogent observations on the drop in crude oil prices. *Whatever happened to the go-juice cartel?*

When gasoline prices rise, there is inevitably a great deal of ill-informed and irresponsible talk about conspiracies, price-fixing, "gouging" poor drivers, etc. After a spike in gasoline prices in 2007, opportunistic House Democrats passed a bill that would have empowered the federal government to lock American citizens in prison for selling gasoline at prices that displeased the president. (Clapping people into prison is the unwavering gut instinct of so-called liberals.) When Republicans in the Senate blocked the Democrats' patently insane plan to — repeat — lock human beings in cages for a decade for selling gasoline at presidentially unapproved prices, the Democrats instantly retreated even farther into conspiracy theory, claiming that corrupt Republicans had sold their votes to Big Oil.

Among the leading gasoline-conspiracy theorists during the Great Gasoline Kerfuffle of 2004 were Ed Markey, who was in the House at the time but has since been elevated to the Senate by

Massachusetts masochists, and Frank Pallone of New Jersey, who co-authored a letter (signed by another 51 Democrats) demanding that the attorney general investigate displeasing gasoline prices, which they blamed on “the Bush administration’s cozy relationship with big oil companies” rather than the usual interaction of supply and demand. Apparently, gasoline prices should command the personal attention of the attorney general at least, if not that of the president.

The mind-boggling fact is that state attorneys general from Arizona to Texas to Illinois actively monitor gasoline prices — and, to make sure that everybody knows they’re serious, Illinois refers to its price monitors as the gasoline “SWAT” team. ...

... Where’s the conspiracy now, when oil prices and retail gasoline prices are plunging? If the goblins in Nancy Pelosi’s head are correct in their insistence that higher gas prices must necessarily be the result of a criminal conspiracy, does it not follow that lower gas prices also must be the result of that same conspiracy? Either nasty wicked Big Oil controls gas prices or it doesn’t. A mind as narrow and uncomplicated as Pelosi’s shouldn’t be that difficult to make up.

Inevitably, the same authoritarian mentality that seeks to police gas prices that are too high also seeks to police gas prices that are too low. George Will relates the sorry story of Raj Bhandari of Merrill, Wis., who brought down upon himself the full force of the state when he committed the crime of giving oldsters a 2-cent-a-gallon discount on gas, and then compounded his misdeed by offering supporters of local youth-sports programs a 3-cent-a-gallon discount. Wisconsin law mandates that retailers sell their gas at no less than 9.18 percent above the price they are charged by wholesalers. (I’ll bet the story of how that precise 9.18 percent figure was arrived at is a fascinating study in political thinking.) Bhandari faced a \$2,000-a-day fine and the possible loss of his business for cutting his elderly and community-minded neighbors a break without permission from politicians. ...

Science20.com posts on the idiot John Holdren who in the 70's predicted a new ice age and who now is claiming it has been forestalled by "human caused" global warming. This wouldn't be much of a story if the man hadn't been named by the president to be his "science advisor." It's true, perfectly ignorant fools wherever you look in the narcissist's administration.

... In "Open For Questions with Dr. John Holdren" a Facebook commenter asks a fairly softball question, if and how humans are affecting the climate, and instead of just answering it the way rational scientists would he goes all eugenics on modern climate science, takes us back to the 1970s kind, which logically leads the public to believe the policies of his boss are hurting business and actually helping no one - because global warming is preventing the new Ice Age.

"In their current phases, moreover, they would be gradually cooling the earth – taking us to another ice age – if they weren’t being more than offset by human-caused warming.”

Yes, Dr. Holdren says our global warming 'pause' is just climate change fighting off the Ice Age. Global warming is our friend. Well, order my Escalade then, I care about the environment too much to want Fresno to look like Alaska.

Throw on some custom 22s, also. The crisis is over.

Wired

What's Up With That: How Squinting Helps You See Better

by Nick Stockton

Recently, I bellied up to a bar waiting for what seemed like an eternity to order my beer. It's not that the place was busy, in fact the bartender was waiting for me. But I'd forgotten my glasses, so reading the tap list—hung high on the back wall—was slow going, even though it was written in six-inch chalk letters. Just before I made my choice, I caught a glance of myself in the back mirror. I was squinting like a sea captain steering through a gale. With wide open eyes, the list would have been unreadable.

Why do people squint to see better? For the longest time, I thought squeezing my eyelids somehow reshaped my faulty eyeballs. And while squinting does slightly change the shape of your lenses, the real answer has to more to do with the back of your eye than the front.

Your eye is like a camera, and blurriness comes mostly from the way it captures and processes light. Photons pass through your lens, which focuses them onto a spot at the back of your retina. There, specialized photoreceptive structures called rods and cones convert these photons into electromagnetic impulses that your brain interprets as shapes, colors, and textures.

Your lens changes shape in order to focus on things both near and far. However, there are limits to its flexibility. When something is blurry, it usually means the light being focused by your lens is either under- or overshooting the focal point at the back of your retina (though blurriness can also be caused by physical damage to your eyeball).

The light from the thing you are trying to look at is also competing with light from everything else in your field of view. All this extra light is basically noise, and like static it obscures your desired signal. When you squint, you are reducing the amount of light coming from other sources—stripping some of the noise away.



A tight aperture is the reason why the bee in this picture is so crisp compared to the immediate foreground and background.

This is like narrowing the aperture on your camera, which is what photographers do to give themselves super tight focus. Make a small hole with your forefinger and thumb, then hold it up to your eye and look at something far away. It's not exactly a telescope, but the thing you're looking at should be a bit less blurry. Or, if that's too low tech for you, you can always build yourself a piece of [cybernetic auto-squinting headgear](#)

Your eye lens reflexively changes shape when you squint (Your eyelid doesn't actually do any work). But, the shape change has little effect on the lens, and has little impact on vision compared to the light-reducing effect of a smaller aperture.

Of course, the best cure for blurry vision is a pair of glasses. I'm trying to remember to bring them with me when I go out more, so I can spend less time ordering my beer and more time enjoying it.

The Verge

[Out of the wild](#)

Deer are invading New York City, and we don't know how to stop them

by Brendan O'Connor

Just before Christmas of last year, John Caminiti, who lives in Staten Island, New York City's least populated borough, watched traffic come to a standstill outside the Staten Island Mall. "It got quiet all of a sudden," Caminiti told me. "I look around, and there was a big buck, standing right on the fringe of the wilderness and the mall. A calm came over people."

Staten Island is located a half-hour by ferry off the southern tip of Manhattan, and the Caminitis have lived here for almost a century. "My grandmother was a baby when my great-grandfather brought her over here," he said. At that time, the island had practically no deer. Then the island had a few deer. Now there are a lot of deer, and they are everywhere.

Nobody really knows where the herds came from. The *Staten Island Advance* reported sightings [as far back as 1991](#); according to [The New York Times](#), deer began appearing "with some frequency" around 2000.

In 2008, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation conducted a survey of Staten Island's deer population. The biologist who searched the woods estimated there were approximately 24 white-tailed deer in the borough. Last winter, the New York City Parks Department conducted an aerial, infrared survey of the island and found 793 individuals — an apparent 3,304 percent increase in just six years.

Deer on the island have gone from a rarity to a delight to a problem with no immediate solution. "I never saw a deer until I went away to college," Sam Immo, a 23-year-old Staten Island native, told me. "When my friends and I were learning to drive, driving at night was a non-issue," she said. "The first time I almost hit a deer, I was flabbergasted."

The consequences of white-tailed deer overabundance extend beyond trampled gardens, the spread of tick-borne disease, or even car collisions. (The Department of Sanitation had a contractor remove 34 "[large dead deer](#)" from Staten Island's roads in 2013.) Too many deer will ruin an ecosystem for years to come, leaving forests barren; eventually, the deer's insatiable appetite will lead to its own starvation. While Staten Island, New York City's greenest borough, hasn't quite reached that point, without management efforts in place, the island will get there soon enough. Under favorable conditions, deer populations can double [every two to three years](#). Staten Island — an area just shy of 60 square miles — might expect its deer population to reach 3,000 by 2017.

It's a pattern that has unfolded across the American Northeast and Midwest over the past 30 years. White-tailed deer — once on the brink of extirpation in the United States — find refuge in the parks, backyards, and golf courses of suburban and exurban America. Humans are largely at fault: the way we develop things, with our fondness for cultivated, abrupt treelines, wide-open soccer fields, and the absence of hunters and predators are ideal for deer. As far as they are concerned, Staten Island — best views of the Manhattan skyline in the tri-state metropolitan area! — is as nice a place to live as any. Unmanaged, however, the population will become an increasingly expensive problem, with any semblance of balance difficult to restore. That one of New York City's five boroughs will soon be overrun with hundred-pound pests (some with horns), at this point, seems inevitable.

Three times larger than Manhattan, Staten Island is home to less than a third as many people — just over 472,000, according to the last census. The island is densely built up at its hilly northeastern end, where commuters board ferries bound for downtown New York City, a few miles away. But away from the city, sloping southwest towards New Jersey and southeast towards the Atlantic, the island becomes increasingly depopulated — a landscape of gutted factories, empty prisons, and parks. "Nothing down here but the deer," John Caminiti told me as we drove in his car. Caminiti and his friends feed the deer at Staten Island's Charleston Cemetery. Sometimes, he said, they eat out of his hand.

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Charleston Cemetery sits along the side of Arthur Kill Road at the southern end of Staten Island — just about as far from Manhattan you can get while still remaining within the confines of the five boroughs. Staten Island has some of the oldest cemeteries in New York state — legendary *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell even wrote a story about them. "The South Shore is the most rural part of the island," he wrote in 1956, "and all these cemeteries are bordered on at least two sides by woods." Today those woods and cemeteries are full of deer: during my visit at Charleston, a small fawn scampered toward a doe at the sight of me.

Arthur Kill Road swings out and around the bottom of the island to the water of the Arthur Kill — a tidal strait separating Staten Island from New Jersey. ("Kill" being a Dutch word for a stream or a creek or other such flowing body of water.) Many suspect that this is ground zero for the island's exploding deer population: deer have been videotaped swimming across the Arthur Kill toward Staten Island from New Jersey towns like Rahway, Carteret, and Perth Amboy — places where sprawling industrial campuses, many abandoned, sit adjacent to marshes, forests, and swamps.

About a half-mile south of the giant mound of the Freshkills landfill, the coast is littered with scuttled ships, earning it the name Staten Island Ship Graveyard. At low tide, I walked across the flats — scattered oysters sticking up out of the mud, rusting hulls sticking up out of the water a little further out — to a heavily wooded peninsula that sticks out towards Jersey. The trek was not very rigorous, but it smelled bad. I saw no deer, but I saw deer shit. A lot of deer shit.

Mike Feller, the recently retired chief naturalist for the Parks Department, told me that a large part of his mission as a nature advocate is to foster connections between green spaces that would otherwise be fragmented — or, as he put it, "ameliorating island biogeography." The Arthur Kills area is a good illustration, Feller said, of that project finding success: "a glorious, contiguous system of forests, marshes, and edges." This is exactly the kind of habitat that white-tailed deer enjoy. According to Caminiti, a deer (or a person) would be able to travel from the northernmost tip of the island to the southernmost without crossing more than four or five roads.

"Trying to make things more connected has a lot of benefits, but also a lot of liabilities. You can't filter out the species you may not want," Feller told me. "Before, maybe there were outliers, stragglers, but no herds," he said. (A *New York Times* article from 1953 tells the story of a Staten Island farmer being gored by one such buck.) "There was a time it seemed like the deer just showed up."

After leaving Arthur Kill, I drove back to the cemetery in hopes of catching one more glimpse of a deer before the sunset. Sure enough, there she was, a doe, staring me down from between the mossy headstones. And then she turned, bounding away unhurriedly into the dim evening woods.

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Before European colonization, North America was home to somewhere between 24 and 33 million white-tailed deer, most widely distributed east of the Rocky Mountains. In the following centuries, that population was destroyed — first by traders operating out of coastal cities, making deals with Native Americans for pelts; then by settlers moving out West. Deer died by the hundreds of thousands as the market grew for their meat and hides.

But it was the second half of the 19th century that truly decimated animal populations across the United States. In his book *Nature Wars*, wildlife historian, journalist, and hunter Jim Sterba writes, "All wildlife suffered, from bison to songbirds. Demand for wild products soared as immigrants poured in and the US population grew to 76 million. Any wild species with any value was killed for meat, fur, or feathers."

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As a result, the United States now has over 30 million white-tailed deer, much more densely populated than they ever were before Europeans arrived. Unchecked by wolves, cougars, and bears, the herds wreak havoc: a [2012 Rutgers University study](#) alleges that white-tailed deer are responsible for most of the \$4.5 billion worth of crops that US agriculture loses to wildlife annually; they account for three to four thousand car collisions a day. New Jersey alone had 31,192 deer collisions from 2011 to 2012. Unchecked by predators or hunters, only starvation will limit population growth.

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accomplishments. But our understanding of what is best for the deer, for people, and for the wider ecosystem is, perhaps, changing. And success is starting to resemble failure.

To combat Staten Island's deer, New York City has pulled together 22 people into a newly organized NYC Interagency Deer Management Task [Force](#). Representatives from the Environmental Conservation are present, but so are employees of the Department of Transportation, Sanitation, Emergency Management, NYPD, USDA, and others. The task force, chaired by the Parks Department's director of conservation Kevin Heatley, had its first official meeting this past December. There, the team came to two conclusions: The deer are a problem. The city needs to do something about the deer.

"It's not the number of deer, it's the density," Heatley told me. At 41 deer per square mile of Staten Island, he said, "The numbers are four times as high as we'd like them to be." The task force will aim to lower that density to fewer than 15 animals per square mile. But no one can agree on when this will happen, or how.

The task force has three priorities: monitor the animals and their impact; educate the public about deer behavior; and manage the population. It is this last goal that's the most difficult and controversial. Communities like Staten Island — largely developed, if not entirely urban, with plenty of green space — have essentially four primary management methods available to them: two lethal and two non-lethal. Lethal methods include regulated culls (i.e. hiring government sharpshooters) and recreational hunting. Non-lethal methods include the application of a contraceptive and surgical sterilization. The fifth option — which isn't really an option but rather the current state of affairs — is to do nothing at all.

"Pursuing, shooting, killing, or capturing" as well as "disturbing, harrying, or worrying" wildlife is prohibited in all five boroughs of New York City and carries a penalty of a year in jail, a \$2,000 fine, or both. That hasn't stopped some: In 2007, [The New York Times reported](#) hunters roaming Staten Island's Clay Pit Pond State Park.

"To just come up and start killing them seems cruel. They're innocent — they don't know."

Margherita Grancio-Rubertone lives near Freshkills Park, across the street from a cemetery where a deer was once found [impaled on the fence](#) (the victim of an unfortunate jumping accident). "It's not a good idea, hunting," she told me. "To just come up and start killing them seems cruel. They're innocent — they don't know." The relative density of Staten Island would also make hunting difficult, or at least uncomfortable. "It would be pretty dangerous, with the deer right across from your house," Grancio-Rubertone said. "God forbid, whatever might happen."

In February of 2013, a *Staten Island Advance* reporter asked Republican mayoral candidate Joe Lhota, a former head of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority who hunts deer in upstate New York, [what he made](#) of the growing deer sightings on Staten Island. Lhota was in town to pick up an assemblyman's endorsement. "The next mayor is going to have to figure out how hunting is going to work," Lhota said, adding that if hunting were to be permitted on the island, it would have to be bowhunting. "Not everybody believes in hunting," Lhota said. "So we need to have a public debate." Lhota later [denied](#) making the comments; the *Advance* reporter stuck by his story, and the paper ended up running an editorial [condemning the idea](#) of allowing hunting in the borough anyway.

The task force does not consider hunting to be a viable option for Staten Island, and just as well — recreational hunting on its own has been found to be an insufficient means of population control. [One study](#) even found that bowhunters in New Jersey and Pennsylvania who were permitted

unlimited tags, could shoot deer over bait, and were working during extended seasons still [could not reduce](#) the size of deer herds to sustainable levels.

One of the study's co-authors was Anthony DeNicola, founder of a non-profit called White Buffalo, which provides wildlife control services using lethal and nonlethal methods. DeNicola's doctoral dissertation at Purdue University was on [deer contraceptives](#); he claims to have killed more than 10,000 deer since he founded White Buffalo in 1995. "People have a hard time accepting 'responsibility' for taking an animal's life, but at what cost to the animal's quality of life?" he asked when we spoke. Communities hire White Buffalo to manage their wildlife when that wildlife has run amok.

DeNicola is not optimistic that the residents of Staten Island or legislators in a city like New York are going to accept widespread lethal deer culls. "When you're dealing with people who live in the New York metropolitan area, they have no day-to-day exposure to nature, to living with nature. The idea of killing animals like deer has a very visceral impact," DeNicola said. "Given the degree of urbanization, your ability to educate, to sway public perception becomes very hard — to get people to understand the need to cull? Good luck. Ideally, you'd pursue an integrated solution" — a mix of lethal and non-lethal methods. "Practically? Not. Gonna. Happen."

White Buffalo has experimented with surgical sterilization, which DeNicola believes will play a greater role in deer management as time goes on. "Most locations that have deer problems have firearm restrictions," he observed. "The data keep reinforcing that sterilization may have some utility." But labor-intensive sterilization is an expensive proposition: you have to catch the deer, and you need someone who is competent in the surgical sterilization process available to perform the act — the bill comes out to around \$1,000 per doe.

"Tony's been doing a lot of the surgical sterilization work, and he has a great team to do that," Allen Rutberg, director of Tufts University's Center for Animals and Public Policy, told me. "I just don't think that his team can be replicated in an efficient manner."

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Rutberg is researching a different non-lethal method of deer management: immunocontraception, or birth control. Last year, he and his team began an experiment with this method in the town of Hastings-on-Hudson, just north of New York City in Westchester County. Hastings, a two-square-mile area, is estimated to be home to around 120 deer; there were [16 car collisions](#) involving deer here in 2011, and the mayor, his wife, and their child all contracted deer-borne Lyme disease. Rutberg's method involves tranquilizing, tagging, and applying the vaccine to each deer once every two years; [similar experiments](#) on Fire Island reduced deer populations in some areas by as much as 50 percent. Rutberg's contraceptive method costs around \$500 per deer, though he argues that if government regulations requiring him to tag each deer were lifted, he could bring that cost down to \$100.

One of the things we like about the sort of contraception that we do is that it seems to be a sort of comfortable, consensus solution," Rutberg said. "It doesn't involve killing anything, it's not too invasive, we don't have to do surgery on the animals, but at the same time it keeps the problem under control. It seems like a nice compromise between treating them as pests and treating them as pets and treating them as nature's gift."

But building a consensus in any community can be a laborious process, especially in a place with as many stakeholders and interest groups as New York City. "A consensus-based approach is

never going to work on a controversial issue," DeNicola told me. "You can try educating, but in the time it takes to do that you'll have deer up to your eyeballs."

The best case scenario for Staten Island, he said, is that five years from now a management method will be agreed on. "Meanwhile, the forest is denuded, Lyme disease spreads, and collisions increase," he said. "The deer are happy!" But as for the city? "They are well on their way to a major headache."

Heatley, the head of the NYC Interagency Deer Management Task Force, shares DeNicola's concern — whatever method the city decides on, time is of the essence if Staten Island is going to solve its deer problem. "When your house is on fire, you go get a bucket. You don't measure the temperature of the flames," he told me. "The deer situation is a wildfire."

Deer aren't the only animals adapting and flourishing in the landscapes we've created: in 1974, only 325 pairs of peregrine falcons were left in all of North America. Today they thrive in cities, whose skylines imitate the falcon's ancestral habitats along cliffs and canyons: the New York State DEC reports that peregrine falcons nest on [every bridge](#) over the Hudson River south of Albany. The world's [largest urban bat colony](#) numbering around 1.5 million — is located underneath downtown Austin's Congress Avenue Bridge. A wolf-coyote hybrid is [spreading through the Northeast](#) from above the Great Lakes, via the Appalachians — its size and weight making it a more fearsome predator than its pure-coyote predecessors. Some [2,000 coyotes](#) have moved from the suburbs around Chicago into the city's downtown, and coyotes from Westchester County — just north of Manhattan — have made it [as far south as TriBeCa](#). Just a few days ago, one was caught on the [Upper West Side](#).

The distinction between nature and civilization has always been a delusional abstraction at best, and a justification for the exploitation of natural resources at worst. We are, at all times, amongst nature, and it is amongst us whether we see it or not. And now the deer, the coyotes, and others are coming back to remind us of the fact.

"Humans have forgotten that they have a role in nature," the Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Thomas Rawinski told me. "We have to take responsibility for the problem, we have to look at ourselves as part of this ecosystem." Human beings shattered the landscape of this continent, only to decide that we preferred it the other way. But putting the puzzle back together is proving to be harder than we imagined.

On Staten Island, that shattered landscape isn't just made up of deer: the island is also struggling with a flock of wild turkeys. For the past 15 years, the birds have made the campus of the South Beach Psychiatric Center their home. It all started with [nine captive-bred birds that were released](#) onto hospital grounds in 2000. Since then, the flock has grown. Meanwhile, the turkey's fecal matter is tracked into the hospital buildings, Ben Rosen, a spokesperson for the Office of Mental Health, told me. The birds are obstructing emergency vehicles making their way in and out of the hospital.

In August 2013, several turkeys were captured by hand and with nets, placed into crates, and shipped to a "state-approved processing facility," according to a statement given at the time by a USDA spokesperson to the *Staten Island Advance*. Their meat was to be frozen and its suitability for human consumption tested.

But the cull sparked a public outrage and was officially halted in September; an estimated 45 turkeys remained on the psych ward grounds. The DEC made accommodations for 28 of the birds to be transported to an enclosed space at the Catskill Environmental Sanctuary instead. The

USDA, which is now handling the relocation process, is employing several different capture methodologies — pre-baited walk-in traps, weighted nets that are launched over turkeys by air cannons, and hand nets — over short periods of time to prevent the turkeys from catching on and finding other places to roost.

It's taken New York City 15 years to address the chaos caused by nine turkeys. One shudders to think how long it will take the city to tackle a population of 800 furiously procreating deer.

DeNicola laughed when I told him about the island's turkey troubles. Getting rid of turkeys is easy, he scoffed. Deer are another case altogether. "You're not gonna relocate deer," he told me with a smirk in his voice. "You're stuck with the deer. You handle them there."

National Review

Whither the Gas-Price Conspiracy?

The only people fixing gasoline prices are politicians.

By Kevin D. Williamson

Whatever happened to the go-juice cartel?

When gasoline prices rise, there is inevitably a great deal of ill-informed and irresponsible talk about conspiracies, price-fixing, "gouging" poor drivers, etc. After a spike in gasoline prices in 2007, opportunistic House Democrats passed a bill that would have empowered the federal government to lock American citizens in prison for selling gasoline at prices that displeased the president. (Clapping people into prison is the unwavering gut instinct of so-called liberals.) When Republicans in the Senate blocked the Democrats' patently insane plan to — repeat — *lock human beings in cages for a decade* for selling gasoline at presidentially unapproved prices, the Democrats instantly retreated even farther into conspiracy theory, claiming that corrupt Republicans had sold their votes to Big Oil.

Among the leading gasoline-conspiracy theorists during the Great Gasoline Kerfuffle of 2004 were Ed Markey, who was in the House at the time but has since been elevated to the Senate by Massachusetts masochists, and Frank Pallone of New Jersey, who co-authored a letter (signed by another 51 Democrats) demanding that the attorney general investigate displeasing gasoline prices, which they blamed on "the Bush administration's cozy relationship with big oil companies" rather than the usual interaction of supply and demand. Apparently, gasoline prices should command the personal attention of the attorney general at least, if not that of the president.

The mind-boggling fact is that state attorneys general from Arizona to Texas to Illinois actively monitor gasoline prices — and, to make sure that everybody knows they're serious, Illinois refers to its price monitors as the gasoline "SWAT" team. New York State maintains a hotline for the purpose of reporting purported gasoline-price gouging and hands down the occasional fine for selling gasoline at "an unconscionably excessive price" when there is "an abnormal disruption of the market." (As opposed to a *conscionably* excessive price during a *normal* disruption of the market? Ease up on the modifiers, guys.) Filling-station owners in Michigan have been prosecuted as criminals when they ran afoul of politicians' price sensitivity. Michigan is a state so ill-governed that it managed to lose its largest city, and its urban murder rates are some of the highest in the

civilized world — but the prosecutors are right on top of pennies-per-gallon variations in retail gasoline prices.

When he was attorney general, Connecticut's Richard Blumenthal, now in the Senate, was an absolute lunatic authoritarian on the issue of gasoline prices. If we take him at his own word, he proposed banning *profit* in the oil industry, calling for an investigation into who is "profiting and profiteering at our expense, so we can stop it." If the government did indeed put a stop to *profiting* from the sale of gasoline, what does the genius from Connecticut think would happen to gasoline retailing?

When gasoline prices jumped after the Russian annexation of Crimea, the usual dopes — dopes who, luckily for the likes of Markey and Blumenthal, have the vote — detected the usual conspiracy: "The big gas companies collude and set the prices." Even George W. Bush fell into that line of thinking, ordering the Federal Trade Commission (no free republic should have a federal trade commission) to conduct an investigation into price gouging in 2006. The FTC's finding? It was all supply and demand.

But that answer is profoundly unsatisfying to people who do not understand or appreciate the most beautiful and interesting aspect of free markets — that nobody is in charge of them. For these people, somebody somewhere has to be pulling the strings. Never mind the geopolitical situation, never mind the fact that most big oil companies do not even operate retail gas stations (Exxon, for example, does not actually own Exxon-branded stations), that gas stations earn very little money selling gas (soft drinks and cigarettes are where they make their jack), and that the evil rotten Big Oil companies generally make very small profit margins (Exxon makes about 8 cents a gallon on gasoline, less than half of what the federal government collects in taxes on the same gallon), and never mind economic reality: If somebody doesn't like the price of a gallon of gas, then that price must be unfair and the result of a conspiracy, and if a sufficient number of dopes in elected office believe the same thing, then it must be a crime, too.

So what the hell happened?

Where's the conspiracy now, when oil prices and retail gasoline prices are plunging? If the goblins in Nancy Pelosi's head are correct in their insistence that higher gas prices must necessarily be the result of a criminal conspiracy, does it not follow that lower gas prices also must be the result of that same conspiracy? Either nasty wicked Big Oil controls gas prices or it doesn't. A mind as narrow and uncomplicated as Pelosi's shouldn't be that difficult to make up.

Inevitably, the same authoritarian mentality that seeks to police gas prices that are too high also seeks to police gas prices that are too low. George Will relates the sorry story of Raj Bhandari of Merrill, Wis., who brought down upon himself the full force of the state when he committed the crime of giving oldsters a 2-cent-a-gallon discount on gas, and then compounded his misdeed by offering supporters of local youth-sports programs a 3-cent-a-gallon discount. Wisconsin law mandates that retailers sell their gas at no less than 9.18 percent above the price they are charged by wholesalers. (I'll bet the story of how that precise 9.18 percent figure was arrived at is a fascinating study in political thinking.) Bhandari faced a \$2,000-a-day fine and the possible loss of his business for cutting his elderly and community-minded neighbors a break without permission from politicians.

When it comes to raising gas prices, it's damned if you do and jailed if you don't.

The thing is, we're not even supposed to be having this fight. James R. Schlesinger, who served as Richard Nixon's secretary of defense before becoming the nation's first secretary of energy

under Jimmy Carter — somehow, the republic had managed without one for two centuries — insisted back in 1977 that we'd run out of oil by the end of the 20th century. The “peak oil” enthusiasts — same old Malthusians, different commodity — have been insisting for decades that we're right on the verge of seeing oil production fall short of demand. Instead, we're producing so much that prices are crashing: It turns out that the road to abundance is abundance, i.e. producing more of what people want and need.

And the cartel that actually does try to engage in price-fixing — OPEC — is powerless to do anything about it.

In fact, the only halfway successful price-fixers are the politicians themselves: From gasoline to sugar to milk, there are a great many commodities that would be less expensive if not for politicians. And, as noted, they make more money off a gallon of gas than Chevron does, to say nothing of gas-station owners like Raj Bhandari. And who is really profiteering from the issue? Presumably, Dick and Ed are better off as senators than they were in less exalted offices. Strange how many Democrats grow wealthy in “public service.” I'm sure your average Big Oil CEO lives in a nice house; Harry Reid lives at the Ritz. The oil companies make their money providing a useful product; politicians make theirs standing in the way.

But it wasn't the politicians who brought down gasoline prices, and it wasn't a conspiracy, either. And it won't be a conspiracy that sends them up again.

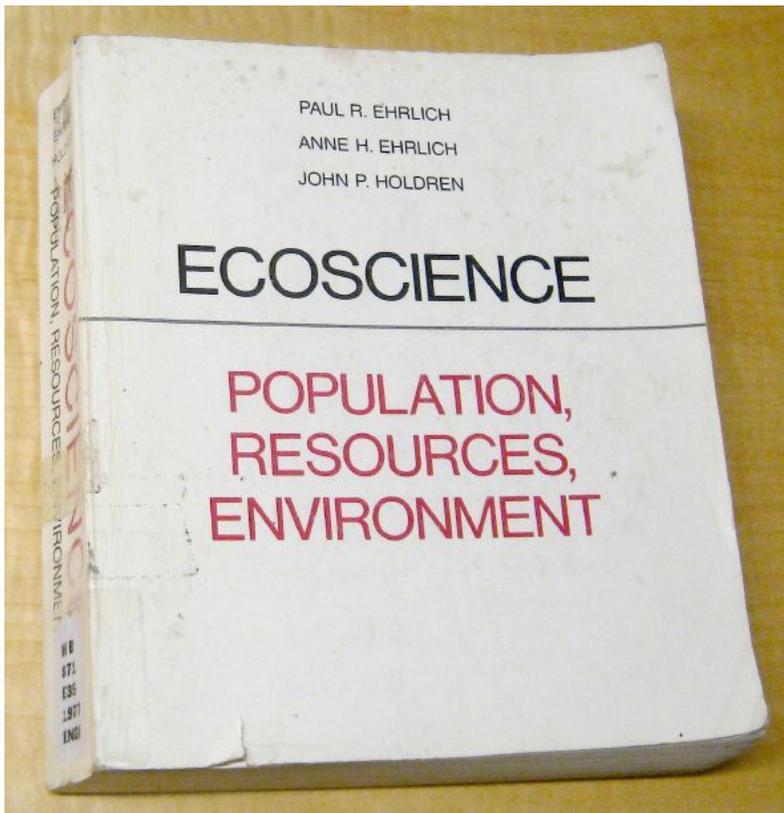
Science20.com

[Dr. John Holdren Reconciles The 1970s Ice Age With Today's Global Warming](#)

by Hank Campbell

In late 2008, the euphoria over electing a man who specifically said he wanted to put science back in its rightful place began to fade. The president-elect, it seemed, preferred the company of UFO believers, an anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist and a guy who thought girls couldn't do math.

Then we got his pick for Science Czar, Dr. John Holdren, and no one else noticed. Science media is somewhere in the same cultural sphere as Republican National Convention delegates in their willingness to support their candidate no matter how bad things appear(1), so while I noted that Holdren was a population bomb believer who advocated forced sterilizations and a New World Order in order to make it happen, very few other people were concerned. They were just happy President Obama was going to lift a ban on human embryonic stem cell research that didn't actually exist.(2)



Ecoscience - 1977's Bible for population crisis Domsday Preppers who favor compulsory abortion and world police.

Five years later, Dr. Holdren is still with us but he has found a way to reconcile his 1960s and '70s Domsday Prophecies with the world of today - we *would be* in that Ice Age predicted in the 1970s except for anthropogenic (3) CO₂, he said in a White House video.

In the early days of global warming, I used to joke about that. In meaningful geological history, I noted, 90,000 out of every 100,000 years have been ice ages so we are 2,000 years overdue and had better hope global warming stays. Now that Dr. Holdren seriously seems to believe that, I need to make it clear I was kidding or he might just write another book with fellow Domsday Prophet Paul Ehrlich.

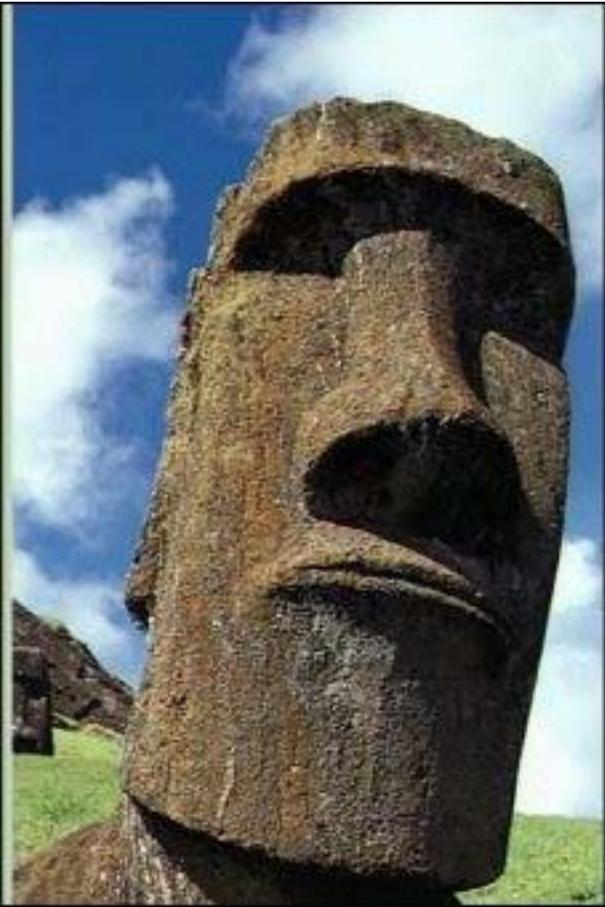
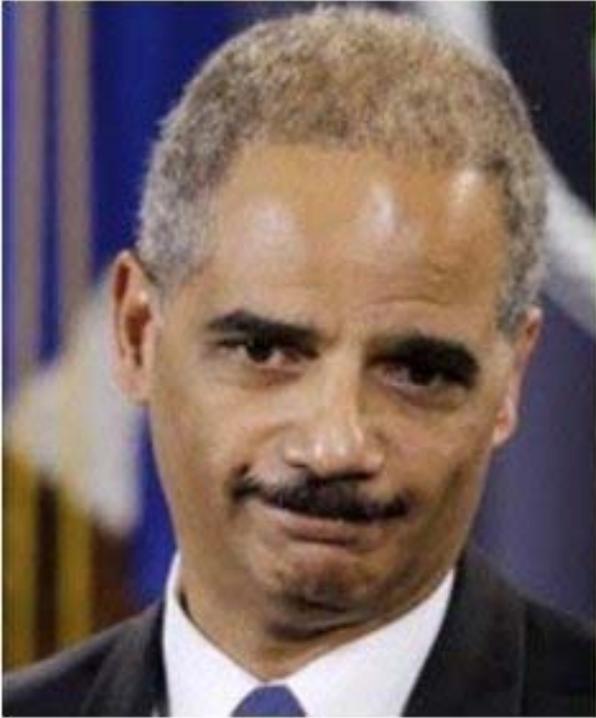
In "Open For Questions with Dr. John Holdren" a Facebook commenter asks a fairly softball question, if and how humans are affecting the climate, and instead of just answering it the way rational scientists would he goes all [eugenics](#) on modern climate science, takes us back to the 1970s kind, which logically leads the public to believe the policies of his boss are hurting business and actually helping no one - because global warming is preventing the new Ice Age.

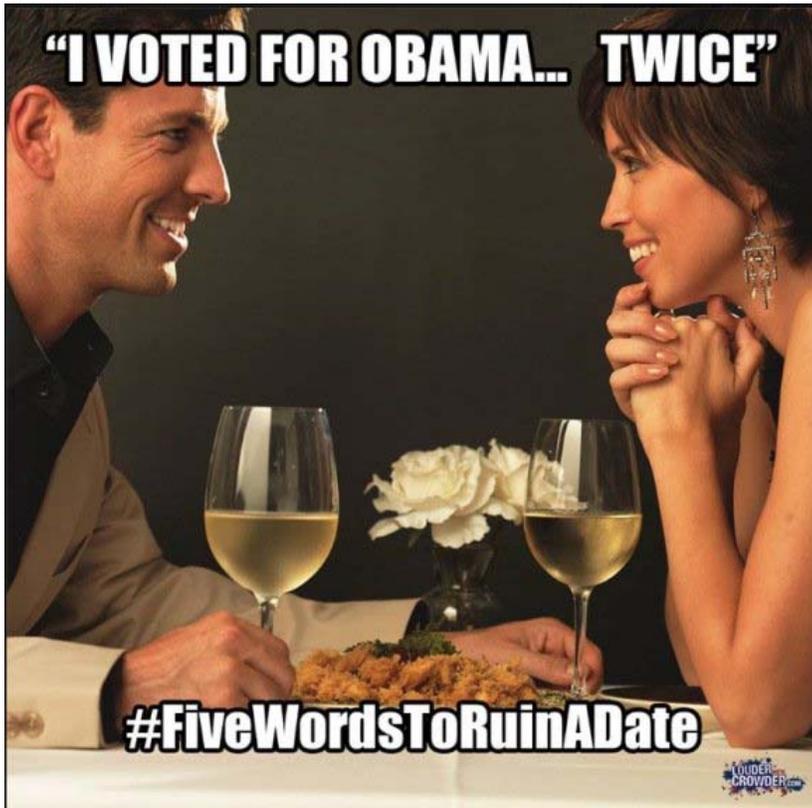
"In their current phases, moreover, they would be gradually cooling the earth – taking us to another ice age – if they weren't being more than offset by human-caused warming."

Yes, Dr. Holdren says our global warming 'pause' is just climate change fighting off the Ice Age. Global warming *is our friend*. Well, order my Escalade then, I care about the environment too much to want Fresno to look like Alaska.

Throw on some custom 22s, also. The crisis is over.





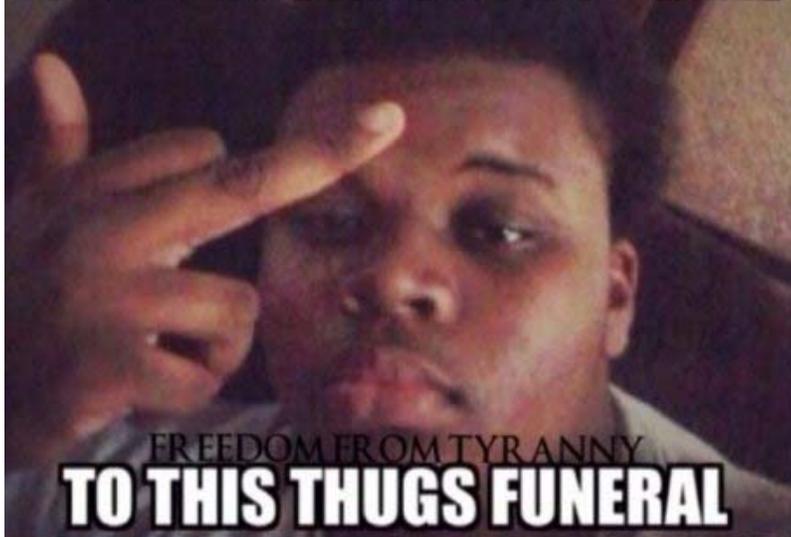


"I VOTED FOR OBAMA... TWICE"

#FiveWordsToRuinADate

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THE WHITE HOUSE SENT 3 OFFICIALS



FREEDOM FROM TYRANNY

TO THIS THUGS FUNERAL



**BUT NOBODY TO JOIN
WORLD LEADERS AGAINST TERRORISM**