



# The Beauty of the Earth

The Earth, it is our physical home, the ecosystem in which we physically survive and thrive.

Have you ever watched one of those videos on social media depicting spectacular places that you can only dream of seeing one day? Perhaps it is the majestic and powerful Kaieteur Falls of Guyana, or the hot springs that make up the caldera of an active volcano on Deception Island in Antarctica. Whether it is the mountains, the jungle, the desert, or the prairie lands, we have our place in it.

On a mundane level, we view the Earth as a collection of resources for our physical survival as a species. The trees and vegetation become furniture, homes, businesses and a source of heat. Water becomes hydropower, a means of transport, and flushes away the dirt and filth of our physical presence. Wildlife and domesticated animals become a source of entertainment, tourism, and consumption. The rocks and soil are dug up, rearranged, and pushed aside to make room for us. The air becomes wind power, a source of transport, and a means to carry away the residue of fossil fuel production. The great oceans become sources of sustenance and a place to store waste.

News of critically endangered or extinct wildlife began to surface in the early 1980s and continue through present day, for example: Baiji River Dolphin (functionally extinct, 2006), Golden Toad (extinct, 1989), Pyrenean Ibex (extinct, 2000), Canarian Oystercatcher (extinct, 1994), Western Black Rhinoceros (extinct, 2011), Chinese Paddlefish (feared extinct, 2007), Formosan Clouded Leopard (extinct, 2013), Caribbean Monk Seal (extinct, 1952, official declaration 2008), Tecopa Pupfish (extinct 1971, official declaration 1981), Caspian Tiger (extinct 1990, official declaration 2003), Eastern Cougar/Puma (extinct 2015), Javan Tiger (extinct, 1976), Arabian Ostrich (extinct, 1966), Japanese Sea Lion (extinct, 1974), and the Madeiran Large White Butterfly (extinct, late 1970s, official declaration 2007). The causes include poaching, habitat encroachment, over fishing, reduction in food supply, extermination, and predators.

The late Dr. Stephen Hawking predicted our own human extinction on planet Earth by 2100, due to overcrowding and energy consumption, which will make Earth uninhabitable.

The way in which we view the Earth itself will determine our survival as a species.

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When we view the world through our spiritual eyes, we see a much different place; we see the Divine Oneness, where all things are connected and interdependent upon one another.

We begin to develop a sense of gratitude for the unlimited abundance that surrounds us. From this gratitude is born a sense of compassion and empathy for the Earth itself, and all it contains.

When we spend time in nature, we feel more relaxed, and a sense of connectedness to all things develops. It's as though we somehow intimately know each blade of grass, every branch on every tree and bush, the flowers, the grains, the wind, and every drop of water of the rivers, lakes and oceans themselves. We know every creature that creeps upon the land, flies in the air, or swims in the water.

Regardless of what path we follow, we are all stewards of the Earth and its resources. We are a part of this "all" and it a part of us. When we act with goodness toward the Earth, the Earth in kind will act in goodness toward us. When we seek the truth about ourselves and our place on our beloved Earth, we come to realize that we need the Earth far more than the Earth is in need of us.

We are, indeed, spiritual beings having a physical experience. How we individually and collectively manifest that physical experience depends on our ability to see with our spiritual eyes, rather than just through the lens of the mundane.

*"Only when the last tree is cut down, the last fish been caught, and the last stream poisoned, will we realize we cannot eat money."* ~ Cree Proverb