

Earth has lost half its trees because of humans

5th September, 2015



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Via Nicholas A. Tonelli on flickr.com

There is good news and bad news regarding the number of trees on our planet. The good news is that there are seven times more trees on Earth than we

thought. Until a few years ago, scientists estimated that the world had around 400 billion trees. However, a new study from Yale University estimates that there are around three trillion trees. That's a three followed by 12 zeroes. That means there are more than 420 trees for every person alive today. Lead researcher Dr Thomas Crowther told the BBC that the new estimate will not change anything. He said: "It's not like we've discovered a load of new trees. It's not good news for the world or bad news that we've produced this new number."

The bad news is that thousands of years ago, the earth had around six trillion trees. Human activity has cut in half the number of trees on the planet. A good example of this is the fact that Europe used to be one giant forest. Now much of it is farmland, fields, cities and towns. Dr Crowther said people are responsible for the loss of three billion trees over the past several thousand years. Humans are destroying around 15 billion more trees every year because of deforestation and the demand for farmland. The scientists said this figure is "considerably higher" than just a century ago. Dr Crowther warned that: "This study highlights how much more effort is needed if we are to restore healthy forests worldwide."

Sources: *BBC / TheGuardian.com / LiveScience.com*

Writing

We need to move out of cities to look after the countryside. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

good news / bad news / planet / estimated / trillion / zeroes / change / number / human / activity / example / Europe / farmland / deforestation / a century ago / effort

True / False

- There is only bad news regarding the number of trees on Earth. T / F
- There are seven times more trees on Earth than scientists thought. T / F
- There are around three trillion trees on Earth. T / F
- There are around 420 trees on Earth for each person alive today. T / F
- The earth used to have over 10 trillion trees. T / F
- Europe used to be one very big forest. T / F
- Humans are destroying 400 billion trees a year. T / F
- The rate of deforestation is smaller today than it was 100 years ago. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. regarding | a. living |
| 2. estimated | b. made |
| 3. around | c. number |
| 4. alive | d. guessed |
| 5. produced | e. a lot |
| 6. cut in half | f. globally |
| 7. figure | g. concerning |
| 8. considerably | h. work |
| 9. effort | i. halved |
| 10. worldwide | j. about |

Discussion – Student A

- How important are trees to you?
- What do you think about what you read?
- How worried are you about the loss of Earth's trees?
- What problems are caused by fewer trees on Earth?
- Is the news in the article good or bad?
- How do you think scientists counted the trees?
- Why do you think the scientist said this is not good or bad news?
- What is your favourite tree, and why?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. good news | a. few years ago |
| 2. there are seven times more trees on Earth | b. half |
| 3. Until a | c. by 12 zeroes |
| 4. a three followed | d. activity |
| 5. 420 trees for every | e. effort is needed |
| 6. Human | f. and bad news |
| 7. cut in | g. be one giant forest |
| 8. Europe used to | h. person alive today |
| 9. this figure is considerably | i. than we thought |
| 10. much more | j. higher |

Discussion – Student B

- What can we do to grow more trees?
- How can humans change so we don't lose more trees?
- What do you do to help the planet?
- How sad is it when a forest is cut down and destroyed?
- What do you think of the fact that we lose 15 billion trees a year?
- What do trees do for the planet?
- What will Earth be like in one thousand years from now?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- rrngaedqi the number of trees
- three litroinl trees
- every person alevi today
- the new iseattem
- oeredvicds a load of new trees
- we've oeucpdrd this
- Human citvatyi
- people are snsopilbere
- soniytrged around 15 billion more
- just a nryteuc ago
- This study ihshilggth how
- retrsoe healthy forests

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. a	5. b
6. j	7. c	8. e	9. h	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Frogs

You think frogs are the most important things for the earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things are not so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): insects, humans or trees.

Role B – Insects

You think insects are the most important things for the earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things are not so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): frogs, humans or trees.

Role C – Humans

You think humans are the most important things for the earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things are not so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): insects, frogs or trees.

Role D – Trees

You think trees are the most important things for the earth. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things are not so important. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): insects, humans or frogs.

Speaking – Earth

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important for Earth at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| • frogs | • birds |
| • trees | • animals |
| • fish | • grass |
| • humans | • flowers |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.