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HOW THE PORTLAND PUNKS TURNED OUT POP GEMS

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IN A LOIN
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AFTER
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TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT ... REWILD!

NOTORIOUS HIPSTER SURVIVALIST URBAN SCOUT OFFERS SOME TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE THE END OF CIVILIZATION.

Peter Bauer first began thinking about the end of civilization when he was 16 years old. At that point he was living in the suburbs of Portland, Ore., and living life like anyone else, on his way to becoming, as he now puts it, a “city-slicker born and raised to work as a wage slave in a coffee shop.”

Then something changed that life. While living in the urban core of Portland, he and a friend decided to create a short film that featured Bauer as Urban Scout, a muddy hunter-gatherer interacting with civilized people. A multidisciplinary artist, Bauer began performing as Urban Scout throughout town. Within a couple years, he had etched a spot in the culture of Portland as that guy in the loincloth who talks about the end of agrarian-based culture. But Bauer is no poseur. He has committed his life to the study of pre-agrarian life and now spends his time educating others on the inevitable downfall of civilization on his website, wherein he details the finer points of, among other things, cooking roadkill and practicing post-apocalyptic safe sex.

In these difficult times, *Sound* thought it wise to ask Bauer what he had to say to civilization. He responded with this open letter. Note that his opinions are his only and do not reflect those of *Sound*. MARK BAUMGARTEN

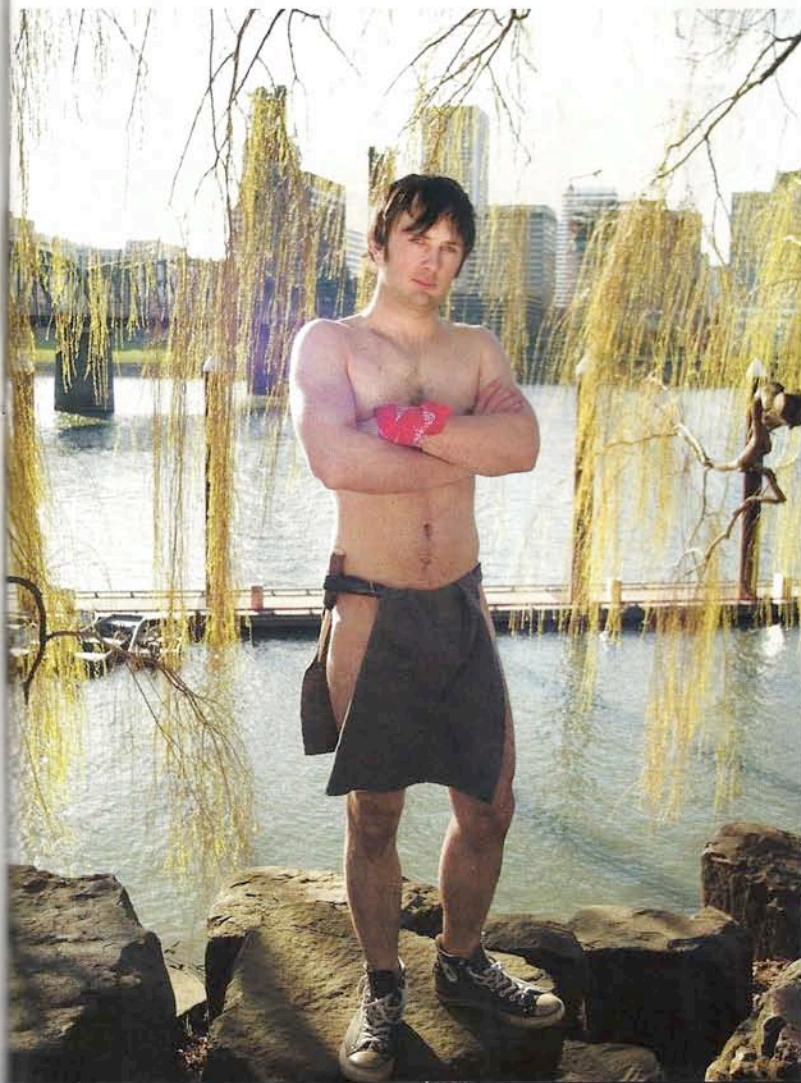


Photo by Blush

DEAR CIVILIZATION,

Ten years ago gas cost 98 cents a gallon. No one had heard of peak oil. No one was worried about an energy crisis. Polar bears still had ice lands to roam. No one was worried about the climate crisis. The economy looked prosperous, not preposterous. When I tried to explain to people that the systems that make civilization possible are unsustainable and would begin to collapse in the near future, they looked at me like I was totally insane.

These days I can pretty much strike up a conversation with anyone about the collapse of civilization. Ironically, the majority of people still have no idea why civilization is collapsing, nor do they understand why civilization is—without a doubt in my mind—the worst thing to ever happen to humanity and to the world at large.

You may be wondering how could I make such a claim since humans have been living on the planet for 3 million years and we only have a written record of the past 5,000. I can say that with confidence precisely because we have no record other than what is written in the land. Humans lived on the planet in a sustainable manner for 3 million years by living as hunter-gatherers; they lived their lives wild and free from any form of domestication. I can say that with confidence because if humans hadn't lived successfully in this way, we wouldn't be alive today.

In our agrarian fundamentalist culture, we've mythologized the hunter-gatherers as a poor people who spend their short lives in a constant state of hunger. Unfortunately, there is little to no factual evidence to support this myth. On the contrary, the mounting evidence we do have says the exact opposite. Hunter-gatherers lived longer, more leisurely lives while keeping their environments thriving and diverse and meeting needs of the people. The same cannot be said for the short history after the “agricultural revolution.”

We did not reach this level of destruction because humans >

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO START REWILDING

Many people ask me the question, "Urban Scout, what are some simple things I can do to rewild?" My response generally annoys them, because I don't give them the classic response they want to hear: invest in green technology, stockpile canned foods, arm yourself with guns and ammo, and ride your bike more. Unfortunately it's just not as easy as thinking about what you want to eat before you open the refrigerator door. But here are a few tips to get you going:

1. INVEST IN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

The worst thing you can do during this time in history is refuse to let go of civilization. People don't want to recognize that our culture is causing one of the largest mass extinctions in history, nor do they want to acknowledge that this "party" is over. Rewilding is the answer to doom and gloom. Collapse is really the best thing to happen to us in 10,000 years. Ride the wave.

2. ARM YOURSELF WITH KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is not an item that someone can steal or take from you by force. Having the asset of knowledge and experience will always prove more valuable than goods like guns and ammo because you become the asset. Learn the hazards of civilization and agriculture. Learn the benefits of indigenous land management techniques and permaculture. Start with the book *Tending the Wild* by M. Kat Anderson.

3. STOCKPILE RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships with friends and family will always last longer than any amount of canned food. People have evolved to live in social organizations because it's the most energy-efficient method for being fed; have multiple people search an area for food or chase an animal. Real survival is sharing with friends and family, not hoarding shit in your bunker. Form a community focused on rewilding your area. Check out the website www.rewild.info for tips on creating local communities of rewilding.

4. TEAR UP THE STREETS

For us to replant the forest, we need to tear up the streets. You can start by tearing up your driveway and plant a garden in its place. Did you know you can compost asphalt with mycelium? There are even organizations that can get you started on this: try www.depave.org.

5. LEARN TO MAKE THINGS WITH YOUR HANDS

People always think I'm going to tell them to learn primitive survival skills, but I actually don't think that's necessary at all. Most of the tools we need to live as hunter-gatherers will be available and easy to make for a long time. I say it's more important to learn to do and make things with your hands. You never know when you'll need to use them. Pick a craft and get crafty with it.

are greedy, evil creatures who only yearn to screw up the environment and stab each other in the back. We are here because humans are products of a system. The civilization system does not work and, as a result, it brings out the worst in people. The myth of the "noble savage" (that native peoples are more noble than civilized) exists because civilized people saw a working system (the hunter-gatherer system) and how that system brought out the best in its members. But rather than understand their system, they thought it must be something inherent in the people themselves. Hunter-gatherers did not live some fantastical perfect existence. They just had a system that worked to meet the needs of its members and the environment.

The complexity of hunter-gatherer economics (yes, hunter-gatherers had economics) is often ignored or unnoticed by civilizationists. Because they didn't have agricultural fields, civilized people could not recognize their management style, but instead they saw "untamed wilderness." Through large-scale and small-scale prescribed burns, hunter-gatherers greatly manipulated the environment, encouraging growth of desired foods and stability in ecosystems. When settlers came to the Americas, they saw a vast "Garden of Eden" that they thought was untended by its inhabitants; they pondered why people would set fire to such a place. We now know that this supposed "Garden of Eden" did, in fact, have gardeners: humans, who also had a sophisticated understanding of fire mechanics.

Our system does not work, has never worked, and will never work. Agriculture is a sedentary subsistence strategy that forces us to stay in one spot for a long period of time. It is what makes cities possible. Unfortunately, it slowly depletes the nutrients in the soil, and it turns it to sand that washes away into the ocean. Once these lands lose their fertility, our civilization expands into neighboring territories, killing everyone in its path, and repeats the cycle endlessly ... until now. We've reached the end of the line. There is hardly any more land to ravage. Most of the soil has been dust for almost 100 years. We've had to pour petroleum fertilizer on it to grow anything. ... But now petroleum is becoming more and more expensive and hard to access.

Sedentary cultures also accumulate wealth, which creates hierarchy and implies slavery. Civilization implies slavery. Although most first-world countries have supposedly abolished slavery (never mind wage-slavery), there are more slaves in the world now than ever before in history. The first-world countries never abolished slavery; they exported it to the third world. Small-scale mobile cultures cannot afford to have slaves because no one has accumulated wealth to hoard over anyone else. The end of civilization means the end of slavery.

Maybe now you've got some idea why I feel I can say that civilization was the worst thing to happen to humanity. Once we understand these fundamental flaws, we must ask the question, What the hell do we do now? If we understand that we cannot save this sinking ship of civilization, and we know that living a wild lifestyle was good enough for 3 million years of our ancestry, than the future looks rather obvious to me; we need to rewild. Rewilding, the process of dismantling civilization and restoring biological diversity and the soil base through hunter-gatherer land management techniques, offers us a beacon of hope and optimism.

Ecological communities bounce back; extinct animals don't. Many species hang on the verge of extinction. Rewilding now will greatly reduce the effects of civilization on the biological community. This is no easy task, but luckily for us, there is a rewilding renaissance happening on the fringe of civilizations' edges. We call this land the rewild frontier, and it exists everywhere civilization is losing control, from the furthest stretches of wilderness to the dandelion coming up through the cracks of the sidewalk in New York City. From the perspective of rewilding, the collapse of civilization is not a societal breakdown but a breakthrough. If humans are living on the planet 100 years from now, it will be because we returned to a wild lifestyle. Why wait for a better life? Start rewilding now!

Sincerely,
Urban Scout

Read more from *Urban Scout* at urbanscout.org.