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# ...d for nature is best for us

*Society for Neuroscience in New Orleans where he showed that blood from young mice reversed some of the effects of aging in old mice. Other mice had*

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damage to be ultimately uplifting

**What Has Nature Ever Done For Us?**

by Tony Juniper  
 Profile 336pp £9.99

It is pretty much official now that the world is going to hell in a handcart. Just in case we might have forgotten about the relentlessly draining impact of 7 billion humans on the Earth's life-support system, this impassioned book reminds us of the key elements in that dismal story.

Juniper documents with ferocious pace and articulacy how the stock practices of hi-tech farming, such as deep ploughing and the ceaseless application of chemicals, have degraded about a third of the world's soils. In our efforts to boost farm production for ever-burgeoning populations we have in less than 30 years used half of all the synthetic nitrogen fertilisers that have been applied in our entire agricultural history.

In the oceans about a third of the world's fish stocks have been exploited beyond the limits of their endurance (some authorities suggest that over-harvesting affects four-fifths of all fisheries). Yet the story Juniper tells that I found even more hypnotically disturbing was that of the discarded flotsam now bobbing in the oceans.

Our mindless dumping of plastic has built up in sea areas with little current into a slow-swirling gyre of oil-based particles; one of the contributors to the book likens the problem to an "unflushable toilet".



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