

Letter

Saving the World with Satire: A Response to Chapron *et al.*William J. Ripple,^{1,*}
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In their article 'A final warning to planet Earth', Chapron *et al.* [1] categorically reject the agenda outlined in the recently published 'World scientists' warning to humanity: a second notice' by Ripple *et al.* [2] and 15 364 scientist signatories. Additionally, and even more surprising, Chapron *et al.* return a stark warning from humanity to planet Earth, while endorsing overpopulation and overconsumption.

For example, they put forth several positions including 'we want more stuff', 'there is no longer a need to preserve filthy and dangerous wildlife', 'growth must indefinitely prevail unrestricted', and 'we seek a second planet'. Such positions are destructive, offensive, and ridiculous, but they may reflect a bit of truth in how some people view the world. We therefore find the satirical approach by Chapron *et al.* [1] to be humorous, refreshing, and potentially effective in helping make progress on the environmental crises identified by Ripple *et al.* [2].

Satire is 'the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices' [3]. In addition to being entertaining, satire makes people

think by helping readers see things in a different light. One of the more frequently cited uses of satire concerned a 1729 proposal from Jonathan Swift to poor and overpopulated Ireland to eat its well-nursed, young, and healthy children 'stewed, roasted, baked or boiled' as a solution to the country's economic predicament [4]. The use of satire to compel readers to ponder societal issues is well entrenched in comic strips (e.g., Figure 1). But in scientific publications, the use of satire to call attention to conservation challenges has had a limited appearance (but see [5,6]). Such limited uptake may reflect the formal nature of the scientific process, but Chapron *et al.* [1] demonstrate that there may be a place for satire in scientific journals after all. Conservation



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Figure 1. Satirical Cartoon Illustrating the Gap between Scientists and Policy Makers. Image courtesy of Union of Concerned Scientists/Justin Billicki.

lends itself to satire because it is a value-laden topic full of social, political, and ethical obstacles [6]. We thus applaud Chapron *et al.* [1] for their use of satire and encourage others to do so too where appropriate, even if the views being expressed are sadly closer to reality than exaggeration. After all, the joke is on us. Nature has been around for a few billion years and will be around for a good while longer. Nature needs us a lot less than we need her. With that in mind, and understanding Earth's new and potentially destructive climate, we have, of course,

also booked our seats to the 'second planet' along with Chapron and his mates [1], leaving those unwilling to put up with the admittedly rather hefty price tag and terrible interstellar food to stew, roast, bake, or boil on Earth a little longer.

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