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Natural Selection Kills 38 Quadrillion Organisms in Bloodiest Day Yet

By The Onion Staff
2015

The Onion is an American digital media company and news satire organization. Satire is a genre of literature in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, into improvement. This Onion article is about natural selection, a central concept of evolution sometimes called "the survival of the fittest." Natural selection is the process where organisms with favorable traits are more likely to reproduce. In doing so, they pass on these traits to the next generation. Over time this process allows organisms to adapt to their environment. As you read the following article, take notes on the author's use of diction and how it contributes to tone.

- [1] EARTH—In a seemingly unstoppable cycle of carnage that has become tragically commonplace throughout the biosphere, sources confirmed this morning that natural selection has killed an estimated 38 quadrillion organisms in its bloodiest day yet.

Numerous reports from biomes on all seven continents revealed that over the past 24 hours, the ruthless biological phenomenon had ended the lives of a record 360 trillion animals and 908 trillion plants, along with 36.7 quadrillion fungi, protists, and bacteria.



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"What we're seeing here is the work of a hardened, practiced killer," said Yale University evolutionary biologist Richard Prum, describing the brutal process through which a massive number of victims—among them thousands of starfish, countless patches of moss, and entire colonies of intestinal protozoa—were massacred with little to no warning. "These weak and helpless organisms, all of which appeared to have had no way to defend themselves against this latest wave of violence, were wiped out in cold blood."

"It is painfully clear this slaughter was perpetrated by a force that holds zero regard for the value of life," Prum added.

- [5] According to observers, natural selection left a trail of dead in such conflict-plagued regions as sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and the troposphere, with the fatalities including slain

emperor penguins, coral snakes, and blue-green algae, as well as several swarms of blue-winged wasps, an assortment of hyacinth clusters, 131 orangutans, and various microorganisms. All were reportedly unequipped to escape the terror sweeping their ecosystems.

In what many are calling its most grotesque tactic, the killer appeared to single out the most vulnerable organisms—particularly the young and the physically weak—for its murderous rampage, slaughtering them without mercy as other members of their species fled in panic. Reports indicated those who escaped the carnage were left with no choice but to try to move on with their lives and survive even as the ruthless killer continued stalking them.

Virtually no species was unaffected by yesterday's killing spree, experts stated.

"This is the work of a killer without empathy, without conscience," said Jyotsna Ramjee, a University of Calcutta zoologist who confirmed that the day's death toll was the largest on official records dating back to 1859,¹ when the perpetrator was first identified. "We have just witnessed the deadliest moment in a genocide that aims to eradicate entire swaths of given populations, taking them out methodically and with complete indifference. It's annihilation on a global scale."

"As horrific as these recent killings have been, I have no doubt there are more to come," she continued. "Even as we speak, this vicious, unfeeling butcher is sizing up new victims, with no regard to their age, gender, or phylum.² The deaths are so sudden, and so pervasive, it makes one wonder if anything can be done at all."

[10] At press time, sources confirmed the latest onslaught in the natural selection process had claimed the lives of a cottonwood tree, 800 million saltwater amoebae, and a Columbus, OH delivery driver who accidentally ingested a food item containing peanuts.

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1. 1859 is the year in which Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* -- a work of scientific literature considered to be the foundation of evolutionary biology -- was published. Darwin's book introduced the scientific theory that populations evolve over the course of generations through a process of natural selection.
 2. A phylum (plural: phyla) is the third highest rank used in the biological classification of all organisms.

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