symbolically, scientifically or aesthetically, the economics of the situation will shift against them. The blunt fact is that when our own species density reaches a certain pitch, there will be no space left for other animals. The argument that they constitute an essential source of food does not, unhappily, stand up to dose scrutiny. It is more efficient to eat plant food direct, than to convert it into animal flesh and then eat the animals. As the demand for living space increases still further, even more drastic steps will ultimately have to be taken and we shall be driven to synthesising our foodstuffs. Unless we can colonise other planets on a massive scale and spread the load, or seriously check our population increase in some way, we shall, in the not-too-far distant future, have to remove all other forms of life from the earth.

If this sounds rather melodramatic, consider the figures involved. At the end of the seventeenth century the world population of naked apes was only 500 million. It has now risen to 3,000 million. Every twentyfour hours it increases by another i5o,ooo. (The inter-planetary emigration authorities would find this figure a daunting challenge.) In s6o years' time, if the rate of increase stays steady-which is unlikely-there will be a seething mass of 400,000 million naked apes crowding the face of the earth. This gives a figure of i i,ooo individuals to every square mile of the entire land surface. To put it another way, the densities we now experience in our major cities would exist in every corner of the globe. The consequence of this for all forms of wild life is obvious. The effect it would have on our own species is equally depressing.

We need not dwell on this nightmare: the possibility of its becoming a reality is remote. As I have stressed throughout this book, we are, despite all our great technological advances, still very much a simple biological phenomenon. Despite our grandiose ideas and our lofty self-conceits, we are still humble animals, subject to all the basic laws of animal behaviour. Long before our populations reach the levels envisaged above we shall have broken so many of the rules that govern our biological nature that we shall have collapsed as a dominant species. We tend to suffer from 209