

interferes with the efficient running of our lives, is ruthlessly eliminated. There is no point in listing such species. Virtually any animal that is either inedible or symbiotically useless is attacked and exterminated. This process is continuing today in all parts of the world. In the case of minor competitors, the persecution is haphazard, but serious rivals stand little chance. In the past our closest primate relatives have been our most threatening rivals and it is no accident that today we are the only species surviving in our entire family. Large carnivores have been our other serious competitors and these too have been eliminated wherever the population density of our species has risen above a certain level. Europe, for example, is now virtually denuded of all large forms of animal life, save for a great seething mass of naked apes.

For the next major category, that of parasites, the future looks even more bleak. Here the fight is intensified and although we may mourn the passing of an attractive food rival, no one will shed a tear over the increasing rarity of the flea. As medical science progresses, the grip of the parasites dwindles. In its wake this brings an added threat to all the other species, for as the parasites go and our health increases, our populations can swell at an even more startling rate, thus accentuating the need to eliminate all the milder competitors.

The fifth major category, the predators, are also on the way out. We have never really constituted a main. diet component for any species, and our numbers have never been seriously reduced by predation at any stage in our history, as far as we can tell. But the larger carnivores, such as the big cats and the wild dogs, the bigger members of the crocodile family, the sharks and the more massive birds of prey have nibbled away at us from time to time and their days are dearly numbered. Ironically, the killer that has accounted for more naked-ape deaths than any other (parasites excepted) is one that cannot devour the nutritious corpses it produces. This deadly enemy is the venomous snake and, as we shall see later, this has become the most hated of all higher forms of animal life.

These five categories of inter-specific relationships-

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