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Established 1845

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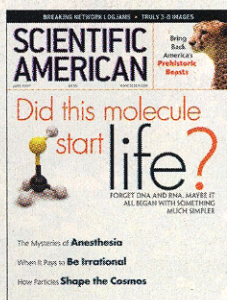
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LETTERS

editors@SciAm.com

Rewilding ■ Network Coding ■ Traveler's Dilemma



JUNE 2007

■ Rewilding Rebuttal

In "Restoring America's Big, Wild Animals," C. Josh Donlan reiterates a proposal to populate the American West with species (lions, cheetahs and elephants) he considers "proxies" for extinct megafauna present there in the Pleistocene. Donlan mentions some of our concerns, published in *Biological Conservation* in October 2006, but dismisses them unfairly. For example, we referenced *Jurassic Park* to emphasize his plan's sensationalism, not out of confusion about evolutionary timescales. There is a fundamental difference between "rewilding" and "Pleistocene rewilding." Rewilding involves reintroducing species extirpated within the past few hundred years to their native habitats; neither species nor habitats can have changed much in that time. The successful reintroduction of the Bolson tortoise to New Mexico is an example of this. Pleistocene rewilding would involve introducing exotic species Donlan hopes will fill the ecological roles of their Pleistocene ancestors.

What concern us are introductions of exotic megafauna where none have existed for thousands of generations. America's ecosystems have evolved since the Pleistocene; the consequences of such introductions cannot be predicted. We fear that threatened ecosystems will be harmed; new parasites and diseases will be introduced; the costs of fencing will be astronomical; and negative responses from local citizens could cause a conservation backlash. Pleistocene rewilding's propo-

"America's ecosystems have evolved since the Pleistocene; the consequences of introductions of exotic megafauna to the continent cannot be predicted."

—Dustin Rubenstein et al.

nents must marshal data to address these concerns. It will not be easy. The long life spans and vast home ranges of many large mammals may make conducting small-scale, controlled experiments impossible. Our views are not pessimistic but realistic. If Pleistocene rewilding is an "optimistic agenda," then its supporters must abandon sensationalism and begin outlining concrete plans for the future.

Dustin Rubenstein University of California, Berkeley	Daniel Rubenstein Princeton University
Paul Sherman Cornell University	Tim Caro University of California, Davis

■ Efficient Exchange?

"Breaking Network Logjams," by Michelle Effros, Ralf Koetter and Muriel Médard, presents a network-coding scenario in which a logjam potentially caused by two messages needing to travel one link between nodes E and F is avoided by sending evidence about those messages via the link and the messages via two unused links connecting to separate nodes.

Wouldn't it be more efficient to get rid of the unused links and add an additional link between E and F?

Barry Margolin
Arlington, Mass.

THE AUTHORS REPLY: *In transportation, it is not usually possible to remove an unused road to add lanes to one with heavy traffic. Similarly, rebuilding a communications network every time we encounter congestion is impractical. Especially so in wireless*