

Greens destroy world's wildlife

By Christopher Booker, The Telegraph, 7 July 2015

This pursuit of the dream of “carbon-free energy” is creating an ecological catastrophe.

Last week's scenes of green campaigners exulting at [the decision by 10 Lancashire county councillors to reject an application to erect a drilling rig for fracking near Preston](#) – on the grounds that it would have an “adverse urbanising effect on the landscape” – recalled a piece I wrote in January, headed “Which 'environment' do 'environmentalists' really care about?”.

On that occasion, the greenies were celebrating the refusal of a previous fracking application, just when they were welcoming plans to add a further 24 wind turbines 400ft high to what is already England's largest onshore wind farm, looking down from the Pennines on Rochdale.

Producing electricity very unreliably fills them with rapture

When Professor David MacKay stepped down as chief scientific adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (Decc) last year, he produced a report comparing the environmental impact of a fracking site to that of wind farms. Over 25 years, he calculated, a single “shale gas pad” covering five acres, with a drilling rig 85ft high (only needed for less than a year), would produce as much energy as 87 giant wind turbines, covering 5.6 square miles and visible up to 20 miles away. Yet, to the greenies, the first of these, capable of producing energy whenever needed, without a penny of subsidy, is anathema; while the second, producing electricity very unreliably in return for millions of pounds in subsidies, fills them with rapture.

Renewable, carbon-free energy creating environmental disaster

Ever more evidence is piling in these days to show how one of the oddest anomalies of our time is the astonishing extent to which the dream of “renewable, carbon-free” energy is creating one environmental disaster after another. [The flailing blades of wind turbines across the world may have been shown to kill millions of birds and bats](#); a fact that their enthusiasts, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, do not advertise. But even more blatant is becoming the wholesale destruction of forests, thanks to the lavish subsidies now being offered to burn them as “biomass” to make electricity.

Butchered in the name of an ideology

A chilling recent report by the journalist David Rose showed the ecological devastation being wrought over thousands of square miles of hardwood forest in the US to fuel power stations in Britain such as Drax, by a process that even some environmentalists now admit ends up by giving off more CO₂ than the coal it is intended to replace. In another report, Rose used shocking pictures to show how the “biomass” craze, heavily subsidised through Decc's Renewable Heat Initiative, is creating a similar swath of destruction across ancient woodlands here in Britain, even including some owned by the climate-dotty National Trust. As one academic ecologist mourns, forests full of wildlife “are being butchered in the name of an ideology”.

It has long been known that a scandal of the age is the even greater havoc being wrought in south-east Asia, where thousands of square miles of rainforest, brimming with life, are being replaced by sterile palm oil plantations to meet [the EU's targets for "biofuels"](#). Last month, the Telegraph published a report on how, inter alia, this is killing off the last orang-utans across a huge area of Sumatra.

Then, only last week, the University of East Anglia published a study on just one of the smallest of 40 massive hydro-electric schemes in Brazil. Twenty-five years after 1,000 square miles of the Amazon rainforest were flooded by the Balbina dam, to produce a mere 250 megawatts of electricity, less than 1 per cent of the 3,546 islands it created still have any significant wildlife left. [Billions of animals, birds, reptiles and insects, not to mention the former forest-dwelling Indian tribes, have vanished.](#) Again, scientific studies show that the amount of greenhouse gases emitted from the rotting vegetation destroyed by this and other hydroelectric schemes, some very much larger than Balbina, is far greater than anything their "renewable" power nominally saves.

Ecological catastrophe

All in all, wherever we look, this pursuit of the dream of "carbon-free energy" is creating an ecological catastrophe. Like so many of the great crimes of history, this one is being perpetrated by people who imagine they are doing something praiseworthy. In this case, possessed by their delusion that they are battling for nature and the future of the planet, they are in fact doing as much as anyone to destroy the very things they kid themselves they are trying to save.