

Overspending Nature's Budget

According to the Global Footprint Network (GFN), we've done it. Done what exactly? Well, nothing we citizens of planet Earth should be proud of. We've exceeded the resources available to sustain us—on August 21 this year to be precise.

In an article by Rachel Cernansky on Planet Green's website, I learned about something called Earth Overshoot Day. GFN determines the exact day each year that we exceed the balance of supply and demand. They do this by calculating nature's supply in the form of biocapacity, the amount of resources the planet generates, and compares that to human demand, "the amount it takes to produce all living resources we consume and absorb our carbon dioxide emissions." Sounds pretty complicated, right?

But the concept, devised by a U.K.-based new economics foundation, simply identifies the day when "demand on ecological services begins to exceed renewable supply."

And this year that day came one month earlier than last year.

According to the groups' website, www.footprintnetwork.org, approximately three decades ago, we crossed a critical threshold, and the rate of human demand for ecological services began to outpace the rate at which nature could provide them. This gap between demand and supply, known as ecological overshoot, has grown steadily each year.

GFN also produces *The Living Planet Report* every two years (last done in 2008) along with the World Wildlife Federation and the Zoological Society of London. The report attempts to document the extent of human pressure on the planet, compare that across nations and look at how it impacts the natural world. Put simply, the last report shows by mid-century we are going to need at least two planets to meet our current consumption needs.

Lovely. Are you thinking what I'm thinking? Can that Space Station hold all of us? Okay, all kidding aside, maybe it is time to think seriously about the three R's we keep hearing so much about: reduce, reuse, recycle, and start living simply—so others can simply live.

Tuesday Trippier is a writer and mother of three with a special interest in green living. She lives in Delaware and is a member of Sustainable Delaware. For more info, check out www.sustainabledelawareohio.org.