

## Overpopulation

Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.

Edward Abbey

There is so much pathological growth in America today that it makes us appreciate things that haven't changed, like the desert. There are places out West where you can see for 10 to 20 miles in every direction and it looks just as it did when Melchor Diaz or Father Kino saw it hundreds of years ago. That kind of continuum, and constancy is precious and fast disappearing.

When my father, Paul B. Parker, flew P51 Mustangs over the southwest during WW2 he became convinced that it couldn't have all been explored, it was just too vast, and thus was born another Desert Rat. He spent his golden years exploring the back roads and far places of the desert southwest.



Paul Parker 1973

He once told me that in the 1940's and '50's in Tucson and other desert communities, Desert Rats were treated with respect. A man may have the look of remissful grooming and yet be the richest man in town.

Another reason, besides growth, that the desert and other wild undeveloped places are disappearing is because magazines like *Backpacker* and *Outside* encourage their readers to seek out wilderness. These publications often have cover stories proclaiming the most secluded, off-the-beaten path locations, trails, and campgrounds to their thousands of readers. They claim hundreds of thousands of subscribers but it's probably more like tens of thousands. It's ironic that they publish articles that claim to reveal the "most secluded" place, the place to experience "solitude", where there are "zero crowds" and "hidden wonders" to thousands of readers.

*Backpacker* reports on hiking in America, the format is always the same with similar items plugged in on the same pages in every issue, and lots of ads. *Outside* is about rich young people doing extreme outdoor sports, for example, it will make a big deal out of someone being the first person to raft some obscure river in Maine, climb some unheard of mountain in Oregon, or ride a bicycle someplace.

*Outside* also encourages people to take their dog with them when they go into the wilderness. Nothing against dogs but, they don't belong out in nature. To a dog wildlife is something to be chased and if possible killed. However you're not likely to see any wildlife if you have a dog with you because animals can tell when a dog is anywhere near them and will try to avoid them. This doesn't stop *Outside* from advertising dog food and publishing articles that promote taking dogs into the wild.

This BLM news release from 2012 should be shared with those people who take their dogs into nature.

Dogs are especially dangerous to deer and elk trying to survive winter. Regardless of our

intentions, wild animals move to avoid people and pets. Even in heavy brush, elk can detect a person or a dog from 1,000 feet away a distance of more than three football fields. As a result, they may move up to a mile to avoid perceived danger. Areas protected from disturbance help deer and elk survive the winter and bear healthy young in spring. Even a deer or elk that appears to have escaped unharmed may have less chance of surviving winter as a direct result of expending stored energy to outrun dogs or flee the perceived threat of humans.

This is also from the BLM

[http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/price/recreation/riverinf/deso\\_dogs.html](http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/price/recreation/riverinf/deso_dogs.html)

Our uniqueness is born in solitude. To discover the nuances and facets of the desert, to experience its subtle faces and notes, and to discover yourself, it is best to do it without a dog.

“most of my wandering in the desert i've done alone. not so much from choice as from necessity - i generally prefer to go into places where no one else wants to go. i find that in contemplating the natural world my pleasure is greater if there are not too many others contemplating it with me, at the same time.”

— Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

