



"Humans the real predators - 10 August - Canberra Times

Philip Machin (Letters, August 7) is quite right that Canberra's kangaroos most certainly do have predators. Studies have shown that 50 per cent of kangaroo joeys are taken by foxes.

The vast majority of young animals of any wild species are taken by predators. Cats take fox cubs, foxes take kittens, the larger birds of prey take both, and all of them take rabbit, rodent and marsupial young.

Most animal species have evolved to bear considerably more young in their lives than are needed to replace the parents. Sad as this is for billions of babies and parent animals, we have to accept - in theory at least - that without predators, most species really would overpopulate and starve.

However, left to do their ecological jobs, predators and prey will generally end up in equilibrium. The predators, along with food availability, regulate the prey population while the availability of prey regulates the predator population.

All species become extinct eventually but, in past epochs, the changes have been gradual enough for new species to evolve to replace them. That is not what is happening in the world today. Humans are directly responsible for the current extinction crisis, through habitat destruction, human hunting, poisoning, motorised vehicles and climate change. These extinctions are neither natural nor gradual.

Killing tens of thousands more native animals and pretending it will somehow fix the problem is just guaranteeing at least one more extinction.