



## What is your environmental footprint?

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*Another guest post from Hans Noeldner, in the spirit of a new year and a new perspective.*

What is your environmental “footprint” on Earth? You can find calculators online and worksheets in study guides, but there is a far simpler, more direct way to comprehend it. Just look at what is below you during your day.

Do you see your feet walking in the grasses and forbs of a meadow, or stepping through the undergrowth of a woodland, or pacing the rows of crops in a farm field?

Do you see a floor, beneath which there is the foundation of a building that precludes natural life and water infiltration? Is the building yours alone, or do you share it with others? Does it extend upwards to accommodate its occupants, or sprawl laterally to maximize the amount of Earth that is suffocated per square foot of interior space?

Do you see a sidewalk or a bike path? Are you alone or amidst a busy throng? Will fifty paces bring you to your next destination? Will 100 revolutions of the pedals fetch you home?

Do you see the floor of a bus or train? Are the other seats mostly full or mostly empty? How many miles of track or lane must the train or bus traverse to convey you to your daily and weekly destinations?

Do you see a runway, and then the whole landscape below wincing from the deafening blast of the engines that thrust you skyward? Can you envision thousands of miles of carbon dioxide contrails in your wake?

Do you see the seat of a car? Do you sit alone or share it with others? Is it a small vehicle, or a big one that projects its mechanized menace far beyond its bumpers? How many lane-miles of asphalt and concrete do you pass over as you go? How many lifeless parking stalls do you occupy when you stop?

If you are going far, going often, and most importantly, going so fast that everything in your way seems an obstacle, stop and ask yourself, “MUST I go where I am going? Can I choose smaller ‘shoes’? Can I occupy smaller spaces? Can I tread shorter, narrower paths?

Can I walk in the footprints of others, and can others walk in mine?



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