



The Oil Drum BookCollage - #1 of 3 (Energy, Ecology, Sustainability, Etc.)

Posted by [Nate Hagens](#) on May 26, 2009 - 9:32am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

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A few months ago, we had a 'Quotecollage' of relevant and/or interesting quotes. Each poster could list two. Reader Debbie Cook suggested we do the same idea with books. This post's intent is akin to a 'book-collage' - each poster can list up to 3 books that they have read that they'd recommend for others to learn about the wider boundary issues surrounding energy, resource depletion, sustainability, etc. Basically a reference list for human supply and demand on a full planet.

This will be a three part post - the two Campfires this Wednesday and Saturday p.m. will be for skills/gardening/reference books and novels/fiction meaningful other selections. With no repeats, we might amass quite a reference list as more people add their picks. A brief description of what the book is about, or a quote would be great. My three are below the fold....



I've acquired a book fetish in the past 18 months and have been buying as many books as I can. Perhaps due to my internalization that there are different forms of capital than dollars. I have read only a few but felt it a no brainer to trade \$10-\$20 in paper for slow decay knowledge, insight, fantasy, entertainment, history, wisdom, etc. In no particular order, here are my 3 recommendations for the 'resource depletion collage':



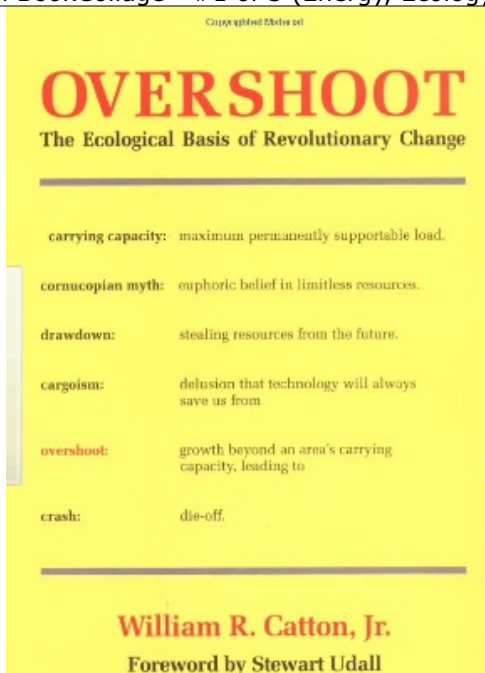
Spent.

Sex, Evolution, and Consumer Behavior

[Spent: Sex, Evolution and Consumer Behavior](#) Geoffrey Miller.

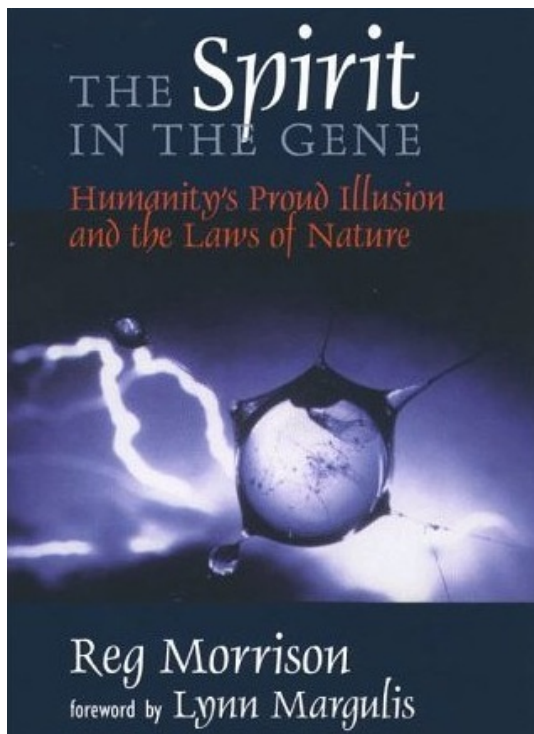
Evolutionary psychology—the compelling science of human nature—has clarified the prehistoric origins of human behavior and influenced many fields ranging from economics to personal relationships. In *Spent* Geoffrey Miller applies this revolutionary science’s principles to a new domain: the sensual wonderland of marketing and status seeking that we call American consumer culture. Starting with the basic notion that the goods and services we buy unconsciously advertise our biological potential as mates and friends, Miller examines the hidden factors that dictate our choices in everything from lipstick to cars, from the magazines we read to the music we listen to. With humor and insight, Miller analyzes an array of product choices and deciphers what our decisions say about ourselves, giving us access to a new way of understanding—and improving—our behaviors. Like *Freakonomics* or *The Tipping Point*, *Spent* is a bold and revelatory book that illuminates the unseen logic behind the chaos of consumerism and suggests new ways we can become happier consumers and more responsible citizens.

I just read this book. I wish I had written it, as it pertains to much of the material in my Phd thesis. Basically a readable, interesting, referenced book on the evolutionary explanation on why we compete to consume.



[Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change](#)

This book reads as if it were written yesterday, but in reality was written almost 30 years ago. Bill Catton presented at our Peak Oil and the Environment conference in 2006 and sat in the front row with his wife. He was there for every talk and I got the impression the conference was a validation of sorts of his work. He was thinking and writing about the issues we discuss on TOD 30 years ago. This was one of the few books that caused me to throw in the towel on wall street career. If you are to pick one book to read to introduce/expand your horizons on humans history on planet, carrying capacity, and ecological limits, I would recommend this one..



[The Spirit in The Gene: Humanity's Proud Illusion and the Laws of Nature](#) By Reg Morrison

From famines and deforestation to water pollution, global warming, and the rapid rate of extinction of plants and animals--the extent of the global damage wrought by humankind is staggering. Why have we allowed our environment to reach such a crisis? What produced the catastrophic population explosion that so taxes the earth's resources? Reg Morrison's search for answers led him to ponder our species' astonishing evolutionary success. His extraordinary book describes how a spiritual outlook combined with a capacity for rational thought have enabled Homo sapiens to prosper through the millennia. It convincingly depicts these traits as part of our genetic makeup--and as the likely cause of our ultimate downfall against the inexorable laws of nature. The book will change the way readers think about human evolution and the fate of our species. Small bands of apes walked erect on the dangerous plains of East Africa several million years ago. Morrison marvels that they not only survived, but migrated to all corners of the earth and established civilizations. To understand this feat, he takes us back to a critical moment when these hominids developed language and with it the unique ability to think abstractly. He shows how at this same time they began to derive increasing advantage from their growing sense of spirituality. He convincingly depicts spirituality as an evolutionary strategy that helped rescue our ancestors from extinction and drive the species toward global dominance. Morrison concludes that this genetically productive spirituality, which has influenced every aspect of our lives, has led us to overpopulate the world and to devastate our own habitats. Sobering, sometimes chilling, consistently fascinating, his book offers a startling new view of human adaptation running its natural course.

I've read this book thrice. A biologist friend says I won't catch all the insights in it until I've read it 5 times. Its original title was 'Plague Species' but that seemed a bit too doomerish. I have interacted with Reg and he is an amazing fellow. The book is an overview, in different terms, than Cattons book, of humanities history and drivers on planet earth. It is beautiful, but depressing at same time.

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Please add your own selections below. This slot is for non-fiction energy/sustainability/systems/future related books. The Campfire threads Wednesday and Saturday will be for practical books and novels/fiction etc....

Enjoy..

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