



## Deaf and Dumb in America - No Peak Oil for Us!

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on August 21, 2009 - 8:13am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

Tags: [debbie cook](#), [media](#), [newspapers](#), [peak oil](#) [[list all tags](#)]

*This is a guest post by Debbie Cook.*

The failure of mass media to cover the peak oil story has been well documented and discussed on the pages of The Oil Drum. As recently as May 3, Kurt Cobb presented the challenges in marketing “peak oil” to main stream media. [His article and subsequent comments](#) are worth re-reading. Many of us believed that if we could just get the stories published, we’d be on our way to addressing our energy challenges. As a testament to the strength of The Oil Drum and its community, the very next day *Peak Oil Entrepreneur* responded with a [marketing plan](#) for peak oil. Seemingly all that is needed is money and a willingness to “get our hands dirty with unclean business.”

Failing to attract sufficient budgets for such a campaign, many of us have plodded on in our individual ways. We’ve met with editors/reporters/publishers. We’ve had our op-ed pieces rejected. We’ve assembled [media panels](#) at conferences. Are we making a difference? If we are, how would we know?

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At the 2005 ASPO-Denver conference I met [John Theobald](#) who uses the peak oil theme in teaching his communications courses at UC Davis. At one of his [Oil Forum](#) events in 2007 I was introduced to his novel way of measuring media coverage in a given market—by using the search term “peak oil” in a paper’s search engine. It was certainly an attention grabber.

This may not be a very scientific way of measuring media coverage, but it can be instructive. I sat down yesterday and spent a few hours perusing various papers around the world. The results, while not surprising to TOD readers, are disappointing:

Domestic Newspapers	"peak oil" hits*
The Tennessean	0
Boston Globe	0
Buffalo News	0
Chicago Tribune	0
Los Angeles Times	0
Baltimore Sun	0
Daily Press	0
Sun Sentinel	0
Washington Post	0
Arizona Republic	0
Denver Post	0
Sacramento Bee**	1
Lexington Herald Leader	1
Atlanta Journal Constitution	2
The Mercury News	2
Providence Journal	2
Fort Worth Star Telegram	3
Philadelphia Inquirer	7
The Statesman (Austin, TX)	8
Arkansas Democrat Gazette	8
Detroit News	10
Washington Times	10
The Tampa Tribune	12
Houston Chronicle	18
The Wall Street Journal	32
New York Times	38
USA Today	49
Christian Science Monitor	52
San Francisco Chronicle	56
Cleveland Plain Dealer	90
<b>The Oregonian</b>	<b>540</b>
* those papers with low numbers of hits tend to be mostly blogs/letters to the editor; others are mix of articles/letters/op-eds	
**announcement of ASPO 2008 conference	

International Newspapers	
The Times of India	0
The Scotsman	10
The Japan Times	10
The Vancouver Sun	10
Belfast Telegraph	15
The Hindu	48
New Zealand Herald	61
The Times (London)	74
The Independent (Ireland)	101
The Morning Herald (Australia)	102
Irish Times	120
Financial Times (London)	127
The Australian	130
Globe and Mail (Toronto)	196
The Guardian (London)	235

On the international scene there seems to be more mention of peak oil on television, as well. As an example, [here](#) is a seven minute panel discussion on peak oil, that we are not likely to see in America.

I won't try to read too much into this little exercise, but with few exceptions, US papers have clearly turned a deaf ear to this issue. The [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) is a bit surprising given that Pat

Murphy's [Community Solutions](#) is a 3-4 hour drive from the Cleveland area. My personal disappointment is in my newspaper, the [Los Angeles Times](#). Frankly, all of the Tribune papers turned up goose eggs; it can't just be a coincidence. Just as with the climate debate, the international media is light years ahead of the U.S. It's as if we aren't grown up enough to read adult issues.

Cynicism does creep in. I can't help but wonder whether the current mindset can be dislodged by another meme or if our peak oil reality will just live as small mammals alongside dinosaurs as [postulated by Greenish](#) back in May:

Windows was a terrible OS, but Mac didn't dislodge it. Likewise VHS and Betamax machines. Likewise, mammals existed alongside dinosaurs, stably, and the dinosaurs were in no danger of being displaced without some huge perturbation. There we have examples of virtual, mechanical, and biological cases; the rules are the rules and are remarkably similar across seemingly conceptually disparate kinds of systems.

I'll check back...after the perturbation.



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