

From "jaws" to
contemporary film: is
fauna more savage
than flora?



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The nature versus nurture debate pales in comparison to the discussion of nature versus animals regarding the future of the human race. Two movies – Jaws and The Birds – are examples of animals turning against humanity in the most tragic ways. In contrast, the two movies The Happening and The Day After Tomorrow are perfect examples of how nature can turn against the human race. Both nature and animals are harmful to humans, but one is proven to be much more harmful than the other: nature is the most devastating way to erase an entire group of beings. Nature doesn't always kill us as immediately as an animal can, but how we treat nature and what we do to create new products for ourselves from nature are more likely and definite to kill a species than the most dangerous animals on the planet; this suggests how devastating and harmful nature is in comparison to our fellow animal species.

Nature is commonly depicted as anything outside of the common human living areas, such as weather, trees, plants, animals, and other living organisms. However, nature can be separated into two categories: animal life and plant life, which includes natural disasters. Animals are commonly feared: numerous phobias have been established due to a number of people afraid of different animals. Many people may not fear plants, but plants have the ability to protect themselves from perceived threats. The common plant one would think of is the Venus Flytrap, and how it captures bugs in its 'mouth' and feeds on them for nutrients (" Do Plants"). Another instance of this is how the Wild Tobacco plant not only emit toxins to kill insects that feed on it, but also emit other toxins to attract enemies of any remaining insects so they are killed as well (" How Plants"). Plants are surprisingly more

threatening than originally suspected, and animals are no match. These two forms of nature can be closely analyzed and proven more threatening than the other.

Galeophobia, the fear of sharks, is very common, and *Jaws* plays on that communal fear by making sharks seem extremely dangerous, more perilous than they truly are. Five people in the movie *Jaws* were killed from the shark attacks; in reality, “there are only 3 to 7 attacks per year [and] only a fraction of those are fatal” (Eicher, et al., 2014). *Jaws* is a perfect example of how animals are easily portrayed as dangerous. However, the documentary *Sharks* refutes these depictions of sharks by stating that some shark attacks were “not picked up on by the media until the movie *Jaws* came out [which] triggered many negative perspectives” (Eicher, et al., 2014). *Sharks* claims that “we have to understand that sharks are the most harmless predators on our planet [because] sharks are harmless. The reason that we think that sharks are so dangerous is because the media has created a monster” (Eicher, et al., 2014). The truth is that sharks are more afraid of humans than humans are of them; this makes the basis of the movie *Jaws* inoperable as a means of inciting fear in the movie’s viewers.

The movie *Jaws* states that the creatures were attacking in free will and killing anyone in their ocean. The movie was based on the book of the same title by Peter Benchley, and he based his book on the true story of Frank Mundus and Jerry Mallow, who caught a 17 foot shark after provocation toward the shark (“The Real”). The shark did not harm the two men, but the men did kill the shark. This story inspired Benchley to write the book “*Jaws*,” and in turn inspired Spielberg to create the movie. Throughout all of this, no <https://assignbuster.com/from-jaws-to-contemporary-film-is-fauna-more-savage-than-flora/>

one was ever harmed by a shark, but the movie depiction claimed so. Jaws has no true facts to prove that sharks are dangerous; the terrifying elements behind the nature of sharks in Jaws are falsified by the documentary Sharks.

The Birds is a stirring film about people getting viciously attacked by birds at random. There was never a clear reason for why the birds attacked, and when they did, they went for people's heads and many other areas of the body. These birds were not only vicious, but conspiring as well, planning their attacks with each other and learning from their previous mistakes.

Remorseless, the birds of this movie were attacking at will and evoking fear in the characters. However, birds do not commonly attack human beings; the number of deaths via bird is so miniscule that a single number could not be provided as a yearly count. Also, birds never attack at will as they did in this movie; birds are portrayed as flocks of villainous aviators that do not hold back, but in reality birds rarely harm people unless provoked or in unplanned accidents. At the end of the movie, only 5 people died, a number nowhere near the amount of people who have died in natural disasters.

Daphne du Maurier was inspired to write "The Birds" after witnessing a farmer being attacked by a flock of seagulls (Maunder). What du Maurier did not see was that farmer being killed by those birds. She still wrote a story of a numerous characters being attacked and some killed by seagulls and other birds, with few survivors. The movie adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock proved even further the dangers depicted in du Maurier's short story, but neither the film nor the book provided the truth about birds. The rarity of a bird attack is so uncommon that a single number cannot be stated as the official death toll of annual bird attacks. Also, birds do not hunt humans; they hunt smaller
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animals or eat plants and fruit because it is what is available to them and what they instinctively hunt for, resources they have hunted for generations. The portrayal of birds in the short story and the film was highly inaccurate and birds are not a creature for humans to fear.

Jaws and The Birds are both tales of random, horrifying animal attacks on people that evoke major amounts of fear on the viewers. A random attack by a shark on a beach is a very common fear for people today, as well as being attacked by birds at any given time. The issue, however, is that these phenomena are extremely unlikely. As previously stated, sharks rarely attack humans, and when they do the attack is hardly ever fatal. In addition, birds are more likely to hunt for small game than large humans, so they, too, are not creatures to fear.

In contrast, we have the dilemma of the lack of safety the rest of nature provides us. Nature is one of the strongest, most detrimental instruments of murder, as portrayed in The Happening and The Day After Tomorrow. The Happening shows that plants themselves can do away with the human race by manipulating their genetic structure to emit toxins into the air, attacking humans' basic need for oxygen (Shyamalan, 2008). The Day After Tomorrow attests that nature has the ability to change its weather pattern and freeze a huge chunk of the population, more than any animal could do over its lifetime (Emmerich, 2004). These two movies show that nature can not only kill millions of people, but also that humans are injurious to the future of our planet. Natural disasters are unavoidable; animals are. 1800 people died in hurricane Katrina; about 3, 000 people died in the San Francisco earthquake in 1906; 10, 000 died in the super cyclone over Orissa in 1999 India; almost <https://assignbuster.com/from-jaws-to-contemporary-film-is-fauna-more-savage-than-flora/>

16, 000 deaths occurred after the tsunami in 2011 Japan; and so many more natural disasters have occurred and will occur for the rest of our life time ("2011"; "Casualties"; "The human"; Langley). Nature is much more hazardous than animals, and these movie concepts will prove so.

Plants have to ability to emit dangerous neurotoxins into the air and cause people to commit suicide in the horror movie *The Happening*. To put it simply, "it makes you kill yourself" as one character so blatantly stated (Shyamalan, 2008). According to the movie, it is completely possible for plants to adjust the chemicals they exude and use it to protect themselves. A character stated that some plants have changed the toxins they emit so wasps would come and eat the caterpillars that attempted to harm the plants; the plants have a specialized way of protecting themselves from impending dangers (Shyamalan, 2008). In *The Happening*, plants "have the ability to target specific threats [and] communicate with other plants"; this lead to the plants working together to eradicate the humans who were polluting the Earth so treacherously (Shyamalan, 2008). Humans are truly a threat to the planet: a subtle note in the movie claims that "YOU DESERVE THIS!" (Shyamalan, 2008). There are already plants that guard themselves against humans: the poisonous mushroom called the "Death Cap" and poison ivy are just a few examples of the plants shielding themselves against humans. Although the movie is science fiction, *The Happening* is a possible phenomenon of something that could happen to this planet, a much more likely scenario than any mass animal attack. In *The Happening*, plants are capable of removing an expanse of the population in the course of a few days, a truly catastrophic means to an end for the human race.

Although credited as yet another science fiction movie, *The Happening* does include some actual facts. Director M. Night Shyamalan based *The Happening* loosely on three movies: *Invasion of the Body Snatcher*, *The Birds*, and *Night of the Living Dead* (Totaro). Although the comparison between *The Birds* and *The Happening* is made – “like in *The Birds*, *The Happening* has an open ending, suggesting that perhaps it is the beginning of the end, an apocalyptic ending caused by our own heedless treatment of the earth” – these two movies are much too dissimilar to be truly compared (Totaro). The birds attack out of freewill, yet the plants kill off the humans because of their reckless endangerment to their environment. *The Happening* provides a surprising way to kill humans due to their thoughtless endangerment to the environment, including pollution, global warming, ozone depletion, and many more methods.

The Day After Tomorrow focuses on how global warming can drastically affect our planet in the form of hurricanes of roughly negative 150 degree Fahrenheit snow across the northern hemisphere (Emmerich, 2004). According to the movie, “global warming can trigger a cooling trend,” which is exactly what happens; the polar ice caps melting disrupted the North Atlantic current, causing the climate to completely shift and freeze most of the northern hemisphere (Emmerich, 2004). “[B]urning fossil fuels and polluting the environment” are what cause the ice caps to melt, and in this movie portrayal, nature fights back and begins “a new ice age” (Emmerich, 2004). This amazing yet tragic change in nature caused millions of people in this movie to die, frozen by a snow storm that could have been prevented if people were more caring toward planet Earth. The basis of the movie was to

get the viewer to understand how our polluting actions are tearing the world apart. One person in *The Day After Tomorrow* stated that all the cars in traffic in New York City are “polluting the atmosphere, messing up the air” (Emmerich, 2004). A real life example of the dangers of cold weather is how a University of North Dakota student attempted to walk 2 miles to the school’s dormitory, and was found 7 weeks later, “frozen to death” in an abandoned van during the 1996-97 Red River Valley Blizzard, the worst storm North Dakota had ever seen with a treacherous flood to follow (“The Flood...”). These facts prove that nature has the ability to clear out all living things, mainly humans.

Although it is a science fiction film, *The Day After Tomorrow* is based upon some truth. Director Roland Emmerich based the movie on the 1999 book “*The Coming Global Superstorm*” by Art Bell and Whitley Strieber (Masters). In this book, the authors tell how cold air can suddenly freeze the Northern Hemisphere, and this concept in the film adaptation is used with the intermingling of global warming as the cause of this shift (Masters). Many aspects of the movie set out to prove this book’s claims and account for many pieces of the prediction as true. Although most of these predictions have now been falsified, the entire theory cannot truly be debunked. Nature has its way of repeating natural disasters, and a freezing climate change has occurred before: woolly mammoths have been found preserved by permafrost, a task that cannot be completed unless the climate suddenly shifts to freezing temperatures rather quickly (Bishop). This proves how unpredictable and harmful nature can be. However, *The Day After Tomorrow*

proves that in the face of devastation, humans have the ability to survive and recover, despite the harshness and horrors nature can impose upon it.

As depicted in *Jaws* and *The Birds*, animals are virtuously dangerous creatures, but the truth about these animals is completely misconstrued in the media. The natural disasters depicted in *The Day After Tomorrow* and *The Happening* are much more probable than the simulated animal attacks of the previously named movies. Sharks attack humans maybe 3-7 times per year, and usually people are not killed by them in said attacks. Birds never attack in large quantities, nor do they attack people; they strictly go after food that will easily fit in their mouths. The world refreezing and having a second ice age is not possible in our life time, but it can happen in a few generations from now due to the way the current generation is treating the environment. Plants have the capability to change the toxins they emit to protect themselves from threats, so *The Happening* can be a cause for mass murder via foliage. These facts verify that animal attacks are not as plausible as human-caused natural disasters. Nature may truly be the death of the Earth.

Nature can be put into two categories – natural disasters and animals – both of which are very dangerous to human kind. Through all the evidence, animals appear to have a selective means for killing humans, whereas nature more clearly has the power to eliminate the human race at large. Death by animals may seem more gory and sudden, but in popular entertainment the number of people killed by animals is nowhere near the number eradicated by a natural disaster. Nature in its purest form is more destructive than any animal attack will ever be.

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