

Chaddesley cares about Planet Earth

More evidence that we do not learn from our past mistakes....

For eight centuries, starting BC, there existed in Peru a culture known as Nasca. The Nasca were one of the most important pre-Inca civilisations. These folk had mastered the craft of weaving and painting pottery. They survived in the semi-arid desert region by building underground irrigation canals and growing such crops as maize, squash, sweet potato. This regular food supply meant they could build a relatively sophisticated civilisation.

But, around 600 AD they were effectively wiped out, or moved elsewhere. It has always been assumed that they were the unlucky recipients of dramatic flooding from one of the worst El Nino events. But no; it now seems that they brought about their own destruction. And this they did by cutting down trees in the area that would have protected them from climate change such as the flooding.

They cut down the huarango trees which would have protected them from the flooding and subsequent soil erosion and drought that turned the lush agricultural land into a desert. Archaeological research has shown that vast swathes of these trees were cut down to make way for crops. The huarango was a remarkable nitrogen-fixing tree as well as a source of food, forage, timber and fuel. After the flooding the Nasca suffered high infant mortality and lower life expectancy, until all that was left was their culture.

Now turn the clock forward to today and the ruthless cutting of the major forests of the world, often in order to grow crops of varying sorts. Sound familiar? Is this what we may be storing up for future generations by seeking short term gain now?

To quote one of the researchers "the cutting down of so many huarango trees by the Nasca eventually meant that an ecological threshold was crossed, from which there was no return". Their future generations suffered the consequences.

Woodsman, spare that tree!

By the way, you may have read about the Nasca lines in South America, a series of elaborate geoglyphs etched into the desert, which can only be seen properly from above – and they were carved on 600 AD, before flight!!

Martin J. Kenrick

For the Working Group set up by the Parish Council