

Urban Sprawl Will Save Ecosystems

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the popular notion that the advancing frontier of urban development has been swallowing and destroying natural ecosystems we present evidence that the sprawl of cities creates ample open space in peri-urban areas. Traditional view of city-nature dichotomy and clear spatial separation should be substituted by a vision that reflects the complex spatial dynamics of city-rural-natural fabric with extended areas of overlap among them. We present a survey of the relevant research concerning urban and ecological systems spatial dynamics and conclude that non-regular, leapfrogging spatial expansion, characteristic of the majority of the modern western cities, may buffer between urban and intensively cultivated agricultural areas and counter their impacts on natural ecosystems. The wealthy sprawling suburbs provide essential habitats for native species and ensure their survival.

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