What is Earth Overshoot Day and why is it coming earlier each year?

Humans have already consumed more natural resources than the planet can renew for this year

By Ben Kelly / 2 August 2018 / independent.co.uk /

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity has used more from nature than our planet can renew in that entire year.

As humans use more and more of the Earth's natural resources, this date is arriving sooner each year. While Earth Overshoot Day was marked on 2 August in 2017, it has arrived on 1 August in 2018.

This means that as a species, we are currently using up nature's resources around 1.7 times faster than the planet's ecosystems can regenerate them, through our consumption rates and a growing population.

Since the day started being observed in 1986, this is the earliest point in the year on which it has ever fallen.
Earth Overshoot Day is calculated by Global Footprint Network, an international research organisation that observes humanity's use of natural materials, as well as the environmental damage they cause.

Mathis Wackernagel, head of the organisation, said: “Fires are raging in the western United States; on the other side of the world, residents in Cape Town have had to slash water consumption in half since 2015. These are consequences of busting the ecological budget of our one and only planet.

“Our economies are running a Ponzi scheme with our planet. We are using the Earth’s future resources to operate in the present and digging ourselves deeper into ecological debt.

“It’s time to end this ecological Ponzi scheme and leverage our creativity and ingenuity to create a prosperous future free of fossil fuels and planetary destruction.”
A group of emperor penguins face a crack in the sea ice, near McMurdo Station, Antarctica

A campaign to #MoveTheDate is also run by the group, who explore solutions through four main areas of food, cities, population and energy.

When taken on an individual country level, the UK passed its national overshoot on 8 May.

An online footprint calculator allows people to work out their own personal Overshoot Day.