

you lose whatever forests, reefs, and species are within reach. That is a huge problem around the Amazon wetlands and rain forest, but not in the Pantanal. The Pantanal, he explained, is not threatened by poor residents who chop down trees and sell them to timber companies to escape from poverty. The culture in the Pantanal is a rare example of man and nature thriving in harmony—through a mixed economy of ranching, fishing, and, lately, ecotourism.

No, the main biodiversity challenge to the Pantanal came from the outside: from globalization. A global triple threat was converging on the Pantanal: Soy farmers on the plateau above the Pantanal basin, eager to feed a rapidly expanding world soybean market, were widening their fields, and pesticides and silt runoff from their farms were fouling the rivers and wildlife. At the same time, the governments of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia had formed a trading bloc in the hope of making their economies more globally competitive. To better get the Pantanal's soy products to market, these governments wanted to dredge and straighten the rivers in the area in ways that could greatly alter the ecosystem. Finally, a consortium of international energy companies was building a pipeline across the Pantanal, from natural-gas-rich Bolivia to the vast, energy-guzzling Brazilian city of São Paulo.

The Pantanal, in fact, is a laboratory of globalization's economic upsides and biodiversity downsides. The biggest upside is that globalization is bringing more people out of poverty faster than ever before in the history of the world. The biggest downside is that in raising standards of living, globalization is making possible much higher levels of production and consumption by many more people. That's flat meeting crowded. And that, in turn, is fueling urban sprawl around the world, an increase in highways and motorized traffic, and bigger homes with more energy-guzzling devices for more people. To feed this ravenous global economy, more and more companies are tempted to take over vast native forests in places like Indonesia and Brazil and convert them to oil palm plantations, soybean farms, and other large-scale commercial enterprises at a