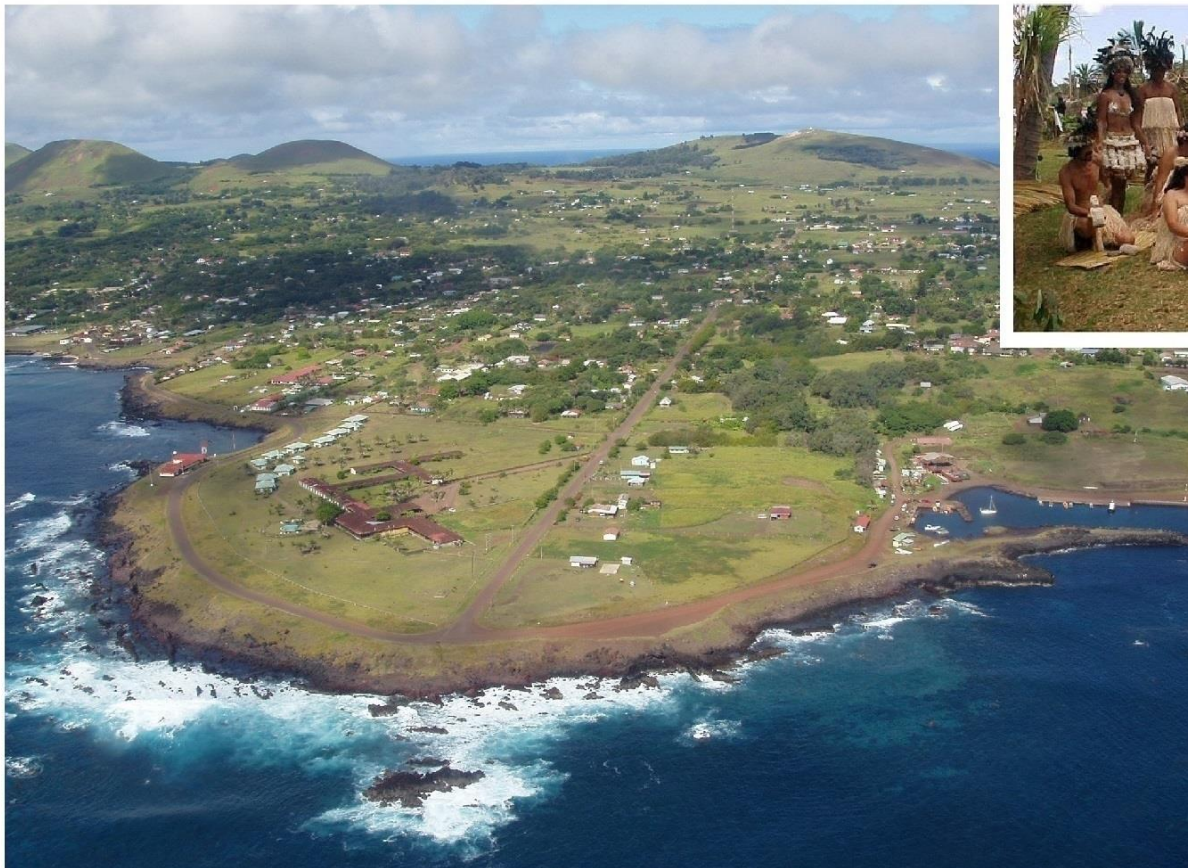




Easter Island is often cited as a poster child for environmental short-sightedness, but the really alarming thing about the Easter Island story for me is this: when Europeans first arrived there, they did *not* find a miserable human population. (The hardship of subsequent years was largely a result of that contact.) The Rapa Nui descendants of those early Polynesian tree-killers were quite content, and heartily feeding on the roasted rats and chickens they introduced, and the produce from rock gardens cleverly designed to protect young plants from the harsh weather of a treeless island.



So, if it turned out they didn't need the trees, **what did it hurt to cut them down?**

If the Rapa Nui miss the species they supplanted, it doesn't show any more than such things show for the rest of us. A shadow on the collective memory perhaps. A hardly perceptible, one might even say a ghostly, veil we've drawn over our self-awareness.