

**E.O. Wilson (editor). 1988 (Fourteenth Printing 1999). Biodiversity National Academy Press. Washington D.C. xiii + 496 pp. + index. Price: Cloth US \$49.95 Paper US\$ 34.95**

The book consists of an introduction by the editor—Dr. Wilson and thirteen parts. The chapters in the sections (parts) vary from as many as six to as few as one (as in the epilogue—chapter 13). The book contains fifty-seven chapters; some of which are written as opinions while others are written as formal-technical papers. These chapters vary in length—from a few pages to as many as thirteen type-set pages. The quality of the papers also vary in depth and scope of subject matter and can be said to span the range from poor in quality to very good in quality.

Instead of focusing on all 57 chapters, this reviewer will settle on discussing how well the themes or the central ideas of the different sections were handled in terms of addressing the scholarly underpinnings of the issues germane to the theme.

Human actions and activities have led to the destruction of habitats that support wildlife. The future of the world and by implication humanity depends on sustaining the habitats that are not only homes to the wildlife but provide humans the sustenance that is so crucial for their survival. The habitats which face gradual destruction due to their conversions for other purposes protect humanity and supply humanity with resources. The massive population explosion and growth (industrial, commercial, residential and agricultural) pose tremendous threat to organisms and plants that are fundamentally necessary for human survival. The trends of conversion of the habitats and subsequent decline in quality and quantity of biological diversity are discussed at length in this book. The state and loss of biological diversity (causes and consequences) are central in the discussions.

However, the following sections of the book give a reader a clear understanding of issues confronting the conservation and preservation of biological diversity on a global scale:

- 1) Challenges of the preservation of biodiversity
- 2) Human dependence on biological diversity
- 3) Diversity at risk: Tropical forests
- 4) Diversity at risk: the global perspective
- 5) The value of biodiversity
- 6) How is biodiversity monitored and protected?
- 7) Science and technology: how can they help?
- 8) Restoration ecology: can we recover lost ground?

- 9) Alternatives to destruction
- 10) Policies to protect diversity
- 11) Present problems and future prospects
- 12) Ways of seeing the biosphere

This book is particularly interesting because of the contributions from the “who is who” in the conservation movement, the science of environmental protection and academic and industrial sectors. The perspectives of these great personalities in the academic world and industry are important in policy matters as they relate to local, national, regional and global concerns. The book is recommended for graduate seminar and undergraduate (senior) seminars in environmental studies.

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