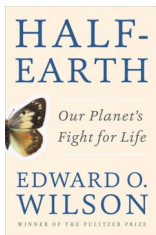


Half-Earth: our Planet's Fight for Life



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The central premise of this book is that in order to save many of the world's species, humankind has to do something truly radical, that is, create wildlife and nature preserves over half the earth.

Renowned entomologist and conservationist, Edward O. Wilson, presents in this book many examples of how interconnected life is in on our planet, and then makes a clarion call to save it. As someone who has actively worked for conservation for decades, Wilson is very knowledgeable.

He points out that of all the fauna and flora now on earth, we know only 20% of them at most at the species level. And much less about how they work together to maintain this web of life. To learn all these species, even were they to survive, would take at least a couple more centuries.

Each chapter explores another class of animal or plant and opens with a frontispieces of an old natural history drawing.

He discusses many kinds of ants, the creatures he's studied most, but also frogs, toads, mammals, bacteria, birds, nematodes, rhinoceroses, and even the smallest creatures that live deep under the sea. Some chapters list the animals and plants that we have already lost. Depressing as this sounds, this book also celebrates each creature. In vivid descriptions of what they looked like, how they behaved, and how certain species worked in concert with each other, this book provides an education about the natural world.

One amazing fact, Wilson provides is that at present, we humans consume 25% of the photosynthetic productivity of our planet. And it is growing year by year. This leaves less and less for other living things. Because the only thing that will save many of the countless species that we are currently losing to extinction is habitat, Wilson posits that we have no choice but to save huge and interconnected portions of it. And he does give a long list of places--some already reserves or parks--that he believes would be both possible and important to save. Some are very familiar, for example: the Amazon Basin and New Guinea; but others are much less familiar: the Altai Mountains of Central Asia, Poland's Bialowieza Forest, and the Wester Ghats of India, to name but a few.

Here in brief is Wilson's argument: "the beautiful world our species inherited took the biosphere 3.8 billion years to build. The intricacy of its species we know only in part, and the way they work together to create a sustainable balance we only have recently begun to grasp. Like it or not, and prepared or not, we are the minds and stewards of the living world. Our own ultimate future depend upon that understanding."

Posted by Dory L. on June 6, 2016

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