

Preface

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Earth's biodiversity, like a great Shakespearean tragedy, lies in a crisis of its own making. Its most widespread and dominant species runs amok across the planet. What it doesn't kill, it plunders. It wantonly destroys what it doesn't need. Yet amidst its numbers rise a stalwart few, steadily increasing in numbers, who seek to right the wrong. Their success rests on two pillars: 1, a deep understanding of biodiversity—why it's important, how it originates, how it persists, what helps it thrive, and what drives it towards extinction, and 2, principles, including those of human values, that can conserve it. With these points in mind we issued a biodiversity challenge. We asked a few ecologists and evolutionary biologists, whom we knew cared deeply about conserving nature, for scholarly essays. We asked that they either “provide logical reasons for, or against, preserving Earth's richness of life,” or “develop creative solutions to preserve biodiversity that might actually work.” You will find their reasoning and solutions in the pages that follow. We hope that they provide not only new knowledge on and about biodiversity, but that the lessons they reveal will aid in protecting this most vital aspect of our humble planet's place in the universe.

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