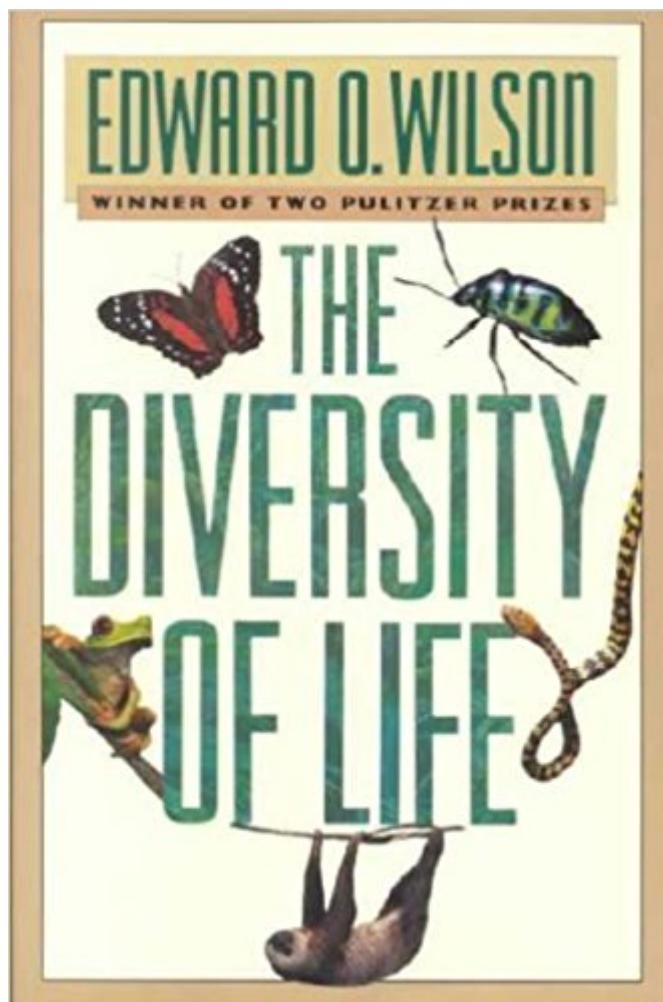


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The Diversity Of Life (Questions Of Science)



Synopsis

View a collection of videos on Professor Wilson entitled "On the Relation of Science and the Humanities" "In the Basin the greatest violence sometimes begins as a flicker of light beyond the horizon. There in the perfect bowl of the night sky, untouched by light from any human source, a thunderstorm sends its premonitory signal and begins a slow journey to the observer, who thinks: the world is about to change." Watching from the edge of the Brazilian rain forest, witness to the sort of violence nature visits upon its creatures, Edward O. Wilson reflects on the crucible of evolution, and so begins his remarkable account of how the living world became diverse and how humans are destroying that diversity. Wilson, internationally regarded as the dean of biodiversity studies, conducts us on a tour through time, traces the processes that create new species in bursts of adaptive radiation, and points out the cataclysmic events that have disrupted evolution and diminished global diversity over the past 600 million years. The five enormous natural blows to the planet (such as meteorite strikes and climatic changes) required 10 to 100 million years of evolutionary repair. The sixth great spasm of extinction on earth--caused this time entirely by humans--may be the one that breaks the crucible of life. Wilson identifies this crisis in countless ecosystems around the globe: coral reefs, grasslands, rain forests, and other natural habitats. Drawing on a variety of examples such as the decline of bird populations in the United States, the extinction of many species of freshwater fish in Africa and Asia, and the rapid disappearance of flora and fauna as the rain forests are cut down, he poignantly describes the death throes of the living world's diversity--projected to decline as much as 20 percent by the year 2020. All evidence marshaled here resonates through Wilson's tightly reasoned call for a spirit of stewardship over the world's biological wealth. He makes a plea for specific actions that will enhance rather than diminish not just diversity but the quality of life on earth. Cutting through the tangle of environmental issues that often obscure the real concern, Wilson maintains that the era of confrontation between forces for the preservation of nature and those for economic development is over; he convincingly drives home the point that both aims can, and must, be integrated. Unparalleled in its range and depth, Wilson's masterwork is essential reading for those who care about preserving the world biological variety and ensuring our planet's health.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are some books where the superlative is simply insufficient. Edward Wilson writes with panache and vigor. He knows how to describe and keep the reader entertained. It was like I was reading fiction. Wilson also writes with detail and accuracy. He knows his science. He knows the intricacy of ecology, and knows enough to know he can't know everything. This allows him to keep the mystery alive for the reader. I was continually astonished to see how he pulled in various aspects of Biology when telling a life story, and various sciences, to show how it All was inter-related. He would pull in constant relationships between different forms of life, and just when I thought he was done, he would go down a microscopic level. And then down another five levels. If it is possible to be a savant within ecology, then this is it. Wilson doesn't stop with good writing and excellent research. He tells us there's a problem. This is another The Jungle- only this time, there isn't much of a jungle left. Through out the book he makes clear that the planet is dying, and dying fast, and the causes of this death. Through the use of the ecological relationships, we see how an attack on one species can be an attack on thousands. Better authors are brave enough to tell us that not everything is okay. The best authors tell us that there's a way to solve these problems. There are gloom and doom authors out there, teaching the world that everything will be destroyed, and the only thing to do now is get saved yourself. That's too little, and too easy, for Wilson.

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