

We need nature more than it needs us

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London Free Press, August 20, 2016

As humans, we are inescapably products of nature, from the time of our conception to our eventual death and ultimately to our physical return to nature. The recognition of this fact is a first step to understanding ourselves and nature.

A second step is learning to live within the patterns and the limits of nature.

Third is an understanding that nature sustains us. We cannot live without it; nature, on the other hand, can exist without us as it did for billions of years prior to the dawn of human life on this planet.

During those early eons of pre-human existence our planet was forming deposits of coal, natural gas, oil, gold, diamonds and other minerals. Nature was forming a thin essential layer of rich top soil that later sustained forests and other flora, including farm crops. Ocean life developed early in Earth's pre-historic times and from this sprung other natural resources enabling many life forms to survive on this planet.

With the advent of modern technology, it is now possible for humans to damage and threaten nature. The harm or the good that we do to nature will determine how nature in turn shapes our lives and provides for our needs.

Humans have been slow in recognizing that while the resources of nature are vast, they are not inexhaustible. Fresh water, clean air, mineral wealth, abundant food supplies, and life-sustaining resources are not limitless.

For many years, people have believed that problems of climate change, erratic weather patterns, periods of drought and floods, depleting fish stocks, and increasing global desertification were unfortunate events happening to us. However, with better science we know that each of these events has its own natural causes, which can be exacerbated, or improved, by human actions or inactions.

Consider, for example, war, increasing population, poverty and malnutrition, disease, and shortages of natural resources. These problems are in large measure caused by humans and will, in the long run, have to be solved by humans.

Many things that occur in nature are more predictable than we had previously thought.

Clean air, minerals, food, and energy resources, such as coal and oil, are important parts of nature's global storehouse. Each day every living person uses some of nature's resources. As our world population increases, nature's resources are

threatened by contamination and depletion. A combined effort is required to protect and preserve nature.

The more our young people can be educated about both the strengths and the limitations of nature, the more responsible they will become as keepers of global resources.

So, a first step in helping nature is education about nature and our environment.

Business and commerce are well positioned to be on the front line for developing the best methods of preserving our natural resources. Along with input from scientists, businesses can promote ecologically sound methods of conserving what we already have while searching for new sources of clean energy consistent with a healthy environment. More energy efficient automobiles, better and cleaner disposal of wastes, scientific advancements in health care, and the development of safe and healthy foods are important ways in which business and commerce can preserve and protect our natural resources.

It is important to select politicians who are truly leaders; people who will think globally and who will serve as gate-keepers for the conservation of our natural resources.

Having nature's gifts in abundance is somewhat like having good eyesight or excellent hearing. For those of us who have these gifts of nature, we rarely think about their importance until we meet someone who lacks these abilities. Then we come to realize how enormously our own lives would change without the ability to hear or to see.

Similarly, without clean air and water, or without healthful food, our lives would not only change, they would be considerably debased and shortened. Let us each do our part to sustain a healthy natural environment.

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