



Life in the Balance

By Niles Eldredge

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In *Life in the Balance*, Niles Eldredge argues that the Earth is confronting a disaster in the making--an ecological crisis that, if left unresolved, could ultimately lead to mass extinction on the scale of that which killed the dinosaurs sixty-five million years ago. Writing for general readers, he reviews compelling evidence for this "biodiversity crisis," showing that species are dying out at an unnaturally rapid rate. He demonstrates the importance of maintaining biodiversity, taking the reader on a journey that reveals the twin faces of biodiversity--over thirteen million living species *and* the ecosystems through which these species transform the sun's energy into life-sustaining matter. Throughout, Eldredge shows how our own fate is intricately linked with that of other species.

Eldredge, one of the world's foremost paleontologists, begins by taking us to the heart of Botswana's Okavango Delta, considered by many to be among the last "Edens" left on Earth--a place where a rich assortment of organisms exist in natural equilibrium. However, it is also a place where the results of human activity--pollution, clear-cutting, water-diversion, encroaching agriculture, disease--now pose the same ecological threats that, on a worldwide scale, put the entire planet at risk. Eldredge then leads us on a fascinating exploration of the Earth's organisms--animals, plants, fungi, the microbes that underpin all life--and of the diverse ecosystems from the tundra to the tropics in which these organisms live. It is a journey that demonstrates the inherent value of the millions of species and ecosystems on Earth, and the importance of biodiversity to the entire biosphere and to humans' continued existence.

Eldredge concludes that humans not only are responsible for the biodiversity crisis but also hold the key to preventing an impending Sixth Extinction. He argues that we must, among other strategies, pledge ourselves to sustainable development and the conservation of wild places. An eloquent and passionate account by one of today's leading scientists, *Life in the Balance* will draw new attention to one of the most pressing problems now facing the world. In this book, Eldredge explores the same themes that illuminate The American Museum of Natural History's new Hall of Biodiversity, for which he is Scientific Curator. The Hall is scheduled to open in spring 1998.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Niles Eldredge lays it on the line in this book, which will probably not be read by those who most need to heed its message. Eldredge maintains that the human conquest of nature is resulting in the sixth mass extinction of life on earth. If we were coal miners, we'd be ignoring our dead canaries right now--witness the increasing rarity of amphibians, the mounting evidence of anthropogenic climate change, the wholesale destruction of the most fragile, biologically rich places on Earth, all for the sake of human desires. In textbook cases of the tragedy of the commons, he shows just how difficult it is to make holistic judgments in the face of individual need. Who would begrudge a starving child a meal of an undescribed and disappearing fish species? Eldredge doesn't spare greedy politicians and thoughtless industry chiefs, who apparently plan to continue selling us the products of environmental destruction until there's nothing left to destroy. The book's message is not without optimism, though, and Eldredge gives examples of how quickly some biomes can heal themselves given a little breathing room. The hope lies in control and moderation of our appetites, and in the celebration of biodiversity, the appreciation of underappreciated species. --*Therese Littleton*

From Library Journal

Eldredge begins in Botswana's Okavango Delta, which, in his opinion, is the closest remaining place on Earth to a true Eden. But even there he finds evidence of impending ecological catastrophe. The loss of biodiversity. Just scanning the pages listing known species extinctions since 1600 is sobering. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Scientific American

This is a book for the general reader who wants to understand what the mysterious notion of "biodiversity" comprises and to appreciate the damage we are doing to our life-support systems on a daily basis.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Sandoval:

The book Life in the Balance can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. Why must we leave a good thing like a book Life in the Balance? A few of you have a different opinion about reserve. But one aim in which book can give many information for us. It is absolutely appropriate. Right now, try to closer with the book. Knowledge or data that you take for that, you can give for each other; you could share all of these. Book Life in the Balance has simple shape but the truth is know: it has great and big function for you. You can appear the enormous world by start and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

Beverly McGahey:

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Debra Riggs:

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Chuck Bryson:

Precisely why? Because this Life in the Balance is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will distress you with the secret this inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were being you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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