

Donella H. Meadows, adjunct professor of environmental and policy studies at Dartmouth College, in an article for the *Los Angeles Times* and reprinted May 15, 1990 in *The Oregonian*, described biodiversity as "the world's most valuable library: the genes of all living organisms." Biodiversity, she wrote, "contains the accumulated wisdom of nature and the key to its future." The DNA within living cells is "nature's knowledge" and as yet we have no clear idea how much of the free service performed by the earth's ecosystems will be canceled out as we crowd more and more species off the face of the planet.

Biodiversity performs services beyond price. "How would you like," Professor Meadows asks, "the job of pollinating all trillion or so apple blossoms in New York state some sunny afternoon in late May? It's conceivable, maybe, that you could invent a machine to do it, but inconceivable that the machine could work as elegantly and cheaply as the honey bee. much less make honey on the side.

"And suppose," she continues, "you were assigned to turn every bit of dead organic matter, from fallen leaves to urban garbage to road kills, into nutrients that feed new life. Even if you knew how, what would it cost? A host of bacteria, molds, mites and worms do it for free."