

Biology Colloquium Explores Harmony With Nature

Ruth Jacobs, Research Assistant with the NPS/CPSU at Oregon State University, attended the 54th Annual Biology Colloquium held at OSU April 29, 1993, where the question explored from many angles was "How can humans live in harmony with nature?"

Speakers covered the subject matter from the abstract to the specific and applied—from "Three Philosophies of Conservation," (by Richard B. Norgaard with U/CA-Berkeley) to "The Concern for Human Population Growth in Conservation Issues" (Anne Ehrlich with the Center for Conservation Biology at Stanford).

Of particular concern in the Pacific Northwest were two lectures by Drs. E. Charles Meslow (USFWS) and David Ehrenfeld (Rutgers U Dept. of Natural Resources). Dr. Meslow addressed the controversy over logging in the Pacific Northwest and conservation of spotted owls. In 1987, he said, we assumed that 300 acres of land per pair of owls was sufficient. That judgment was based on the best data then available. Today, he

he said, we recognize that a pair of these owls uses several thousand acres of forest, with a strong dependency on old-growth systems. User groups and management agencies have struggled to deal with this changing base of knowledge at the same time that local and global demands for forest products have increased.

"In the case of the spotted owl," he said, "we have avoided decisions outright... when our knowledge warned us to do otherwise. In other instances, we have postponed reasonable decisions that would alter ongoing management programs pending more information."

We still have options for owl conservation, he noted, "but they are fewer and more limited."

Dr. Ehrenfeld argued that humans live in an increasingly artificial reality. "Many of us," he said, "don't even care about our natural world, although we are intricately tied to it, because we have lost touch with reality."