

Text of 'The Future of Biodiversity'

Miguel Araujo: "I think it's important that society recognizes that the voice of scientists is an important one. We have to think very carefully about our choices because there's no coming back."

Robert Scholes: "I don't think that we're facing the end of the earth, nor do I think we're necessarily facing even the end of the human population, but what I think that we are looking at is an extremely impoverished world, which we could avoid if we put our mind to it."

Neville Ash: "Everyone has a role to play in combating the degradation of ecosystems and ecosystem services. There are likely to be some very big challenges ahead if we don't do something now."

Paul Leadley: "And one of the things that DIVERSITAS and some other international science programs have been doing is to really emphasize the importance of that link between biodiversity loss and human well-being, and it's up to us as a scientific community to demonstrate to decision-makers that they have to do something about biodiversity loss because it's going to affect human well-being."

Neville Ash: "So we need to do a much better job at communicating the roles and the values of ecosystem services, to people in rural, urban, rich and poor places alike."

Norbert Jürgens: "It is simply wise to understand the processes in natural ecosystems better, and to exploit or use ecosystems only to an extent which does not result into a decline of these systems, so sustainable land use, sustainable use of ecosystems is one of the goals of biodiversity research. We want to come to a sustainable management of the environments on which we as humans depend."

Anne Larigauderie: "For example, for the ocean, one of the main recommendations there would be to protect fisheries and put quota. This is something that is difficult politically, but it's a matter of survival for the ocean biodiversity and for ocean life in general."

Robert Scholes: "We have to start thinking outside of protected areas. Most biodiversity doesn't live in protected areas, the biodiversity that we depend on for our everyday existence actually lives among us, in agricultural fields, in urban areas, in rangelands, and it's that biodiversity that we need to protect."

Terry Root: "There are species out there that just need a bit of help, and they'll be able to survive. As the globe is warming, the best place for species to go will be toward the pole or up in elevation. We need to set up corridors that are going from north to south, or from low elevation to high elevation, so that species that are able to move, they can move. So humans have got to come up with very, very creative ways to try and help species to actually be able to move."

Norbert Jürgens: "There is a wide range of examples where research results have been turned into application. The most important step for researchers is that they should not only deliver data, but information or even better tools which decision-makers can apply."

Woody Turner: “Politicians often tend to want sort of the broad-scale view. Satellites give you the big picture, and it’s really a wonderful tool for communicating to policy-makers the changes that are taking place. You can certainly see changes such as phenological changes, the changes of the seasons that we’re all familiar with. You can see forests as they move in response to changes in climate. You can certainly see a deforestation event, even a fairly small-scale deforestation event where the trees have just been taken out. The total amount of deforestation, forest loss that’s taking place on a yearly basis for the humid tropics is somewhere between 12 million hectares per year and 17 million hectares per year, about an area the size of Greece being lost.”

Stephen Schneider: “We have to take a look at where the hotspots in the world [are], and how can we try to get financing to keep them reasonably protected. And one of the places where we can use a high-leverage, multiple-benefit strategy is by protecting primary forests, in particular tropical forests with very, very high biodiversity. There is a lot of carbon in there. If only we could take the hardhead and the chainsaw out of the hand of the poor person who lives in the forest cause right now that’s their easiest way to make an income, feed their families and improve their quality of life. So [what] we wanna do is we wanna put a ranger hat on them, give them a pair of binoculars and protect the forest and pay them to become stewards of the land. So if we could get international agreements to protect the climate that we get a prize on carbon, we’d have money available to keep those people living in the forest working to protect and sustain for their children, grandchildren and everybody the existence of the forest, maintaining the biodiversity of the forest and keeping the carbon in the ground. It’s a win-win-win.”

Norbert Jürgens: “I know many regions in Africa where people are very, very aware of the risks, they are aware of a decline of the ecosystems and their productivity which already happened in the past, and they are worried about all these threatening predictions of climate change. So especially certain African populations are really worried and prepared to adapt to a more sustainable lifestyle, and we have very good cooperation with some groups who even restore their environments for the next generation.”

James Leape: “There are solutions. The technologies to meet this challenge are at hand, and what we need to do now is muster the political will to take the steps that are needed.”

Terry Root: “We have to go ahead and start and trying to make things right. It doesn’t matter that we are losing a lot of things already, we can save a lot of things if we start right now.”