

Text of 'The Value of Biodiversity'

Robert Scholes: "The key issue is to stop thinking about biodiversity as something which occurs somewhere far away, in a national park perhaps. Biodiversity is with us and all around us and takes many forms."

Neville Ash: "Biodiversity is not just about the individual butterfly, the individual microorganism, the elephant – it's about all of these things, and particularly it's about how they interact."

Robert Scholes: "We're embedded in biodiversity, and we have to think of ourselves as part of that rather than as that something being distant from us."

Norbert Jürgens: "The awareness of the public is not yet well developed that all this diversity of living organism contributes strongly to our human well-being because they stabilize ecosystems."

Neville Ash: "There are lots of different ways in which people benefit from ecosystems. The enjoyment that we derive from the fact that tigers and pandas and other charismatic species exist out there, even though we may never see them in person, but we enjoy their presence. The inspirational benefits we derive from looking at a pleasant landscape, the recreational benefits we derive from being out walking in a forested area, or boating down a river."

Vandana Shiva: "Biodiversity is the real wealth of the poor because, in the absence of capital, it still provides their needs for food, for fibre, for fuel, for everything they need."

Neville Ash: "Many of the existing medicines have their sources back in nature. So the regulation of water flow, for example, the quality and the quantity of water is regulated by functioning ecosystems, by forests, by wetlands and other system types. By taking out contaminants, by decomposing organic wastes, by regulating the flow of nutrients around the system including through agricultural systems to then supply food, by regulating the pollination of our crops and fruits and so on."

Terry Root: "A lot of people think in monetary means, they don't think in other means, and so if they realize that a species is worth x amount of dollars, then they will be more likely to want to save it. If we lose all of our pollinators, and our crops need to be pollinated, then that means humans are gonna have to go out and pollinate the crops, that's not gonna be an easy thing to do."

Robert Scholes: "The total value of biodiversity is infinite so having a debate about what is the total value of nature is actually pointless because we can't exist without it, therefore its value reaches infinity. What we can talk about, meaningfully, is how much do you lose for a small change in biodiversity in relation to what you gain from having done some development that causes that loss. We actually very frequently lose more in undertaking developments which destroy biodiversity, than we gain from the economic flows that come from the development that we did."

Neville Ash: "If you looked at a balance sheet of a business and you saw that 60% of your economic indicators were showing a downturn, you'd be very worried indeed. This was exactly the same for our natural capital. It was looking at ecosystem-based indicators, looking at ecosystem services, 60% of them are being degraded."

Stephen Schneider: “What about the polar bear ecosystem? How much is that worth? I once heard an economist tell me: as many dollars as people are willing to spend to visit them as tourists. Well, I think that’s immoral.”

Vandana Shiva: “At this point of humanity being at the precipice of deliberate extinction imposed on itself, we need to remember that nature is not just a resource for exploitation. Nature has her integrity, her sovereignty, and her rights.”