



Bas Haring: Why biodiversity loss is not a disaster

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If there is one thing that is dear to every ecologist, it is biodiversity. In this provocative book, Haring challenges the idea that biodiversity has a high value by articulating his arguments into three questions. Does biodiversity loss generate severe pain, cause a collapse, or is it a tragedy in itself? After defining biodiversity and what can be considered as a tragedy, he starts a debate. Haring does not deny that some species provide clear benefits to humans, that they are functional in ecosystems, can feel pain, or have a cultural value. Yet, he reasons that none of these arguments alone can justify the importance of all species and that, in the quest for the value of biodiversity, we should ask ourselves whether a high diversity is needed or not. Diversity itself is no good; it is the diversity of good things that is good, he says. He concludes his essay begging the readers to admit that they value biodiversity only because they love it and nothing more. Yet, I would argue that biodiversity can and should be valued for multiple reasons, that there is no need for a universal justification. Moreover, who should judge its value? Anybody, according to the author. But if a biologist is asked to judge an art collection and she fails to see why it would be disastrous to lose it, would it say something about the actual value of the collection or about her judgment? The scientific facts in the book are sometimes inaccurate or

based on old literature, and the scientific content should be taken with a grain of salt. Overall, the book seems directed to conservation practitioners and its function may be to show ecologists why some people perceive the fight against biodiversity loss as meaningless. Yet, let's not forget that extinction is irreversible, and that species nowadays disappear at unnatural rates because of human activities. Halting biodiversity loss means fighting against deforestation, pollution, climate change and, ultimately, for our survival. This is why failing to recognise biodiversity loss as a disaster could have catastrophic consequences.

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