

THE LOGIC BEHIND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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We have Environmental Protection laws to Save the Environment.

We have the Endangered Species Act to Save the Species.

Once upon a time, when I was but a boy, before Richard Nixon pushed congress to adopt the National Environmental Protection Act, we young activists only wanted the pollution to stop. We invented the "Crying Indian" to help Keep America Beautiful, and it worked.

But all we wanted was for the pollution, the disrespect, the abuse to stop.

Slowly the worm turned. And Saving the Environment became Preserving the Environment which became Preserving the Habitats which became Preserving the residents of the habitats which became Preserving every individual member of every individual species within every individual habitat.

Saving the environment had become saving "every living thing."

Environmentally, and yes, speaking as a professional, that is just stupid.

Our environment is dynamic. It changes all the time. Speaking as a person trained in successional ecology, or the changes in habitats, I can tell you that the worst thing we can do is intervene in a manner which introduces stasis.

The easiest proof is in lakes. The second in rivers. Lakes need to fluctuate up and down. People like lake levels to stay the same. Controlled lakes have problems with water quality, exotic plants, and exhibit a variety of other maladjustments. Streams and rivers need to flood. It's good for the river and it's good for the flood plain. People like the rivers to stay put. In short, if we weren't such control freaks, our environment would be a lot better off.

In summary, to save a species it is not necessary to save every member of that species. To save a habitat, the worst approach is to attempt to isolate it from all change.

To be effective, I believe we need to fundamentally reassess how we protect and manage our natural resources.

One more. The lawn. The lawn simply does not occur in nature, but we delude ourselves into thinking we are "green" if we have a nice big lawn. But that is a different topic.