

A few good books Reading about the Earth

Just in time for the holidays is a great new book. After reading about Edward O. Wilson's "The Diversity of Life" (Belknap Harvard), I had to go out and buy it. He's a well-known biologist, a Harvard professor, but this is not a textbook. It's one of those deliciously special books I wish everybody would read because it explains so much so well, and beautifully.

At the Earth Summit the U.S. delegation stood alone in opposition to the rest of the world against the biodiversity protection treaty. Our own Endangered Species Act is up for reauthorization and might be endangered itself. (See "What is a species?" by Stephen Jay Gould, "Discover", Dec. '92) These are two of the most serious issues of our time because the health of various populations reflect the health of various ecosystems, which add up to the health of the whole biosphere.

Another worthwhile book is "Last Animals at the Zoo — How mass extinction can be stopped" by Colin Tudge. It's all about modern conservation or "captive" breeding programs. You might have noticed the recent

news about the ongoing demise of wild populations of tigers, both Bengal and Siberian. There are enough tigers in captivity to keep the species going — so they are not exactly endangered — but the gene pool has to be carefully managed. The zoo as "ark" is a fascinating story.

Tudge projects, like the World Health Organization, that the human population will continue to expand, peak at 10 billion to 12 billion in another generation or so, then decline, "one hopes of its own volition." After a few centuries we, or they, might restore enough natural habitation for the release of many currently endangered species, provided we begin the programs to carry them over while enough individual animals remain for an adequately diverse gene pool.

To "balance" my reading I also absorbed "The Covenant of the Wild — Why animals chose domestication" by Stephen Budiansky. He argues that the process of domestication began with natural selection, sort of accidentally, and continues as a perfectly natural evolutionary process by which the animals most fit to survive in the modern

— “
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” —

world turn out to be those which have evolved into a mutually dependent coexistence with ourselves: our livestock.

He makes some interesting points but makes it sound like the charismatic fauna we like to identify as wildlife are destined to bite the dust and that's nature's way.

In reading these books and thinking about these things, I realize how much of what we think is important rests on our various assumptions about the future. Some projections are more accurate than others. Two weeks ago it was again reported that stratospheric ozone depletion is worse than expected.

Are you realistically preparing and educating yourself for the future?

—Daniel Clinchard

Baldrige

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There are a few in every group that chose a darker mentor. Satan and his ilk, claim a great number of followers among the little children. But the impulse is the same, to seek out means power, protection and fearlessness.

Comic books, then, offer a fairly mild alternative to the flagellations, self inflicted or otherwise, so often associated with youthful devotion. They were cheap, disposable and left no permanent scars.

Why were they so condemned by our adult counterparts?

Those who watched the miserable daytime dramas of my youth

— “
Both skin mags and comics had to be hidden from your parents. Both were sweated over and read until they fell to pieces. And not a few comic pages were stuck together permanently by a young boy's overenthusiasm for some scantily clad super heroine.
” —

have no ground from which to speak about any rotting away of the mind possibly caused by comic books.

I knew this even then: We will have our indulgences.

But today's comic books, like the daytimes and evening dramas of today, have changed. They have pretensions of literature, culture and moral instruction. That seems too bad, really. Because soon there won't be any outlet for the raw untreated nightmare that is adolescence that doesn't involve a video game. Skateboarding is the obvious exception, but requires a good deal of coordination unavailable to a lot of kids just coming into their own.



Paul Tisdale

Kepfield

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ers, such as Boneyard Press. His thinking takes a step-by-step approach — get accepted by the smaller presses, allowing time to improve his art and techniques, and then break into the big time, places like DC Comics.

His ultimate goal?

"I'd like to wake up late and draw comics all day. To make a living off doing my art, have a good body of work with a client I enjoy doing business with on magazines, comics, whatever.

"I'm down at the bottom, but I've got my hand on the ladder, and I'm not going to let go."

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