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SUSTAINING LIFE

How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity

EDITED BY
ERIC CHIVIAN & AARON BERNSTEIN

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“...by focusing on amphibians, bears, primates, gymnosperms, cone snails, sharks, and horseshoe crabs whose contributions to human well-being are critical and the tragedy that would ensue if these organisms disappeared. They offer strategies to change the way we eat, farm, travel, live, work, and use energy to sustain the ecological complexity that allows all species to thrive. A powerhouse of information on a topic that concerns us all. Highly recommended.”

--Library Journal

It is widely acknowledged the natural world holds secrets to the development of new kinds of safer and more powerful pain-killers; treatments for a leading cause of blindness-- macular degeneration-- and possibly ways of re-growing lost tissues and organs by, for example studying newts and salamanders. But, the experts warn that we may lose many of the land and marine-based life forms of economic and medical interest before we can learn their secrets, or, in some cases, before we know they exist.

A new generation of antibiotics, new treatments for thinning bone disease and kidney failure, and new cancer treatments may all stand to be lost unless the world acts to reverse the present alarming rate of biodiversity loss. In **SUSTAINING LIFE**, edited and written by two physicians from Harvard Medical School, who were joined by more than 100 leading scientists from around the world, **SUSTAINING LIFE** presents a comprehensive review of how human medicines, biomedical research, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and the production of food on land and in the oceans depend on biodiversity. Seven groups of organisms, some of the most endangered on Earth, provide detailed case studies to illustrate the contributions they have already made to human medicine, and those they are expected to make, if we do not drive them to extinction—amphibians, sharks, bears, horseshoe crabs, primates, cone snails, and gymnosperms. The authors introduce the concepts of biodiversity and ecosystems services and explain how both are threatened by human activity. Most importantly, **SUSTAINING LIFE** explains what individuals can do in their personal lives to help conserve biodiversity.

SUSTAINING LIFE has been co-sponsored by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the U.N. Environment Programme, the U.N. Development Programme, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. With a preface by Kofi Annan and a foreword by E. O. Wilson, **SUSTAINING LIFE** is sure to become the definitive volume on the conservation of biodiversity.

ERIC CHIVIAN, M.D., is the Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. He shared the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. He is the lead editor and author of *Last Aid: The Medical Dimensions of Nuclear War* and *Critical Condition: Human Health and the Environment*.

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