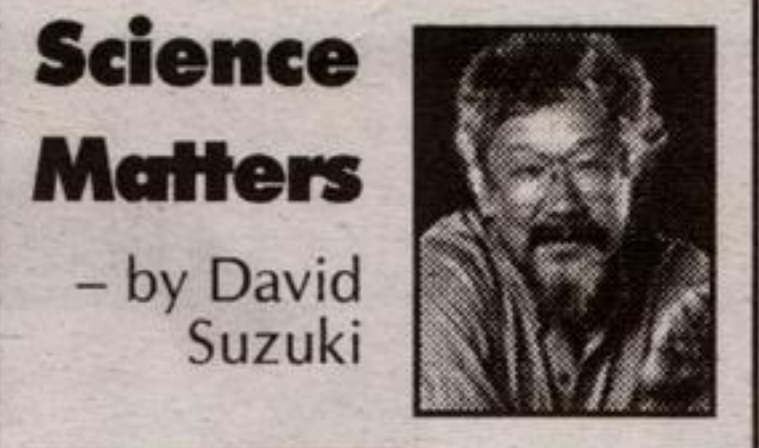


Simplistic views threaten diversity



Recently, I complimented Canada's Supreme Court for upholding a Quebec town's ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides. It was the right move for several reasons, from the toxicity of the chemicals, to the lack of proper testing, to questions as to who should shoulder the burden of proof of their safety.

Of course, another problem with the unrestricted use of pesticides is that they are non-specific. Not all insects are pests. In fact, most are beneficial. Unfortunately, pesticides can't usually tell the difference, so they end up killing both wanted and un-

wanted insects. That is, until the insects become resistant and the cycle is repeated with a new chemical.

Managing ecological problems in such a way doesn't usually work very well, and not just for insects. On the plains of North America, for example, prairie dogs have been considered pests for a century. Much of their habitat was ploughed under to make way for agriculture. Furthermore, cattle ranchers felt that these rodents were competing with their livestock for food, so governments spent millions attempting to eliminate them through poisons. Today their

numbers are less than one per cent of their historic levels.

But in ecosystems everything is interconnected, so one species cannot be isolated and removed without causing unforeseen changes throughout the entire system. As the prairie dogs were killed off, for example, ferret populations plummeted because prairie dogs were their primary food source. Today, the black-footed ferret has been extirpated from Canada and is one of the most endangered species in North America.

Ironically, recent studies have shown that prairie dogs are actually beneficial to the overall productivity and health of the grasslands. Studies by US Forest Service biologist Dan Userk, for example, have found that total plant production is 24 per cent higher in areas inhabited by prairie dogs than in areas that are grazed by cattle. And in areas where both animals are present, plant biomass (the weight of plant material) is 13 per cent higher over areas where just cattle are present. So contrary to popular belief, prairie dogs are actually good for both natural ecosystems and ranchers.

Next month, the US Forest Service will release a new management plan for remaining US grassland areas. Proposed changes to management methods could help

bring back prairie dogs, along with ferrets and many species of birds and other animals that have not fared well due to overgrazing by cattle.

This sort of change represents an important shift in the way we "manage" our ecosystems. At one time it was assumed, for example, that if we streamlined ecosystems around human needs, they would be more productive. According to this reasoning, removing prairie dogs would make the grass grow faster and give the cattle more to eat. We now know that such simplified versions of ecosystems are wrong.

In fact, studies have shown that generally, the greater the diversity of plants and animals in an ecosystem, the more productive and stable it is. We are just beginning to understand this relationship, so some researchers have questioned it, suggesting that the conclusions of such studies may be a function of the experiment design,

rather than of the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem function. An analysis of these studies recently in the journal *Nature*, however, found that this relationship is most likely an ecological phenomenon, not an experimental anomaly.

The more we learn about our ecosystems, the more alarming the current rate of biodiversity loss becomes. As we lose species and genetic diversity, ecosystems may become less stable, less productive and less effective at providing services that

people and other animals depend on - services such as cleansing water, filtering air and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. If we want to ensure that these services are still viable for future generations, we must pursue more thoughtful ways of balancing immediate needs with the complexities of the natural world.

To discuss this topic with others, visit the discussion forum at www.davidsuzuki.org.

Had two or more falls? Free clinics to help

Your chances of hurting yourself if you fall increases with age. As people get older, muscles and bones may no longer be able to protect them. As a result, a fall can result in unnecessary pain, loss of independence, or even death.

Halton Healthcare Service (Milton District Hospital and Oakville-Trafalger Memorial Hospital) is now offering Falls Intervention Clinics to individuals 65 years of age and older who are living in the Region of Halton.

"Individuals who attend the clinic and follow the recommendations will be less likely to fall again and may be able to continue to live independently in the community for a long period of time. We expect that we will see a reduction in Emergency Department visit and hospital admissions related to preventable falls amount this age group," says Dawn Prentice, Program Leader, Rehab and Geriatrics Program at Halton Healthcare Service.

This free service, offered at both hospital sites, is available to individuals who have experienced two or more slips, trips, near falls or falls in the past year. "At the clinic, a thorough examination is done to determine the client's risk of having a fall. Working with the client and his or her family, a personalized care plan is developed to help prevent future falls. It may include simple home safety measures, a physical activity program, and/or home help" explained Cathynn Hoyle, R.N. case manager.

A comprehensive information package is provided to all clients, and regular follow-up calls are made to ensure that the client is doing well.

This service is available

thanks to a four-year grant awarded to the Trauma Prevention Council of Central West Ontario Trillium Foundation. Halton Region Health Department and Halton Healthcare Services are involved with the implementation of the "Are You In Jeopardy? Seniors' Fall Prevention Project."

Seniors or their family or professional caregivers may book an appointment at the Falls Intervention Clinic by calling 905-338-4613 or 905-876-7022 (Milton).



Natural Health News

Miracle of 'OIL OF OREGANO'

This is the number one ancient herb in power and value. It is not the "spice" oregano but wild oregano derived from certain species of oregano plants.

You need to know how oregano can reverse numerous ailments. Oil of oregano is the premier natural antiseptic and possesses a wide range of microbial killing powers which:


- helps against infections such as sore throat, colds, flu, bronchitis, etc.
- protects you, while travelling, from infectious diseases.
- is good for cold sores, candida, canker sores.
- allergies, sinusitis.
- bites, ear aches.
- heals wounds, etc., etc.

We have had numerous people come back and tell us how oil of oregano helped them. We would recommend you come in and talk to us.

Try the North American - Herb & Spice Oil of Oregano.

Visit us every last Wednesday of the month for our customer appreciation day. A 10% Discount applies to all in-store regular priced items!

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ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BR. 197 ACTON POPPY FUND

Dear Citizen,
November 1st to November 11th...

is the time of year when the Royal Canadian Legion asks that you wear a Poppy in Remembrance of those who gave their lives and those who were grievously injured during the two World Wars, the Korean War and the Peacekeeping Operations.

POPPY BLITZ TO BE HELD FRIDAY NOVEMBER 2ND.

Your generosity in giving to the Poppy Campaign will enable the Legion to carry out the basic purposes and obligations of the Poppy Trust Fund, which are,

- To give assistance to Canadian Ex-Service Personnel and Canadian Merchant Navy personnel and their dependants, who are in need of such assistance
- To give assistance to Ex-Service personnel of Commonwealth and Allied Countries who reside in Canada
- Paying for Bursaries for needy students

The Remembrance Parade will be held Saturday November 10th at 10:45 am at the Cenotaph.

Please plan to attend this service and support the Poppy Campaign. Your involvement is very much appreciated.

Frank Spielvogel
Poppy Committee Chair

Income from 2000 Campaign	
Wreaths, Poppies & Donations	\$6,812.00
Expenses:	\$5,613.27
Increase in Trust Fund	\$11,307.51

Frank Spielvogel
Poppy Chair

Gord McCutcheon
President Br. 197

WREATHS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LEGION

Lest We Forget



Come to **DOWNTOWN ACTON** on **Sat., Oct. 27th**
at the old **YMCA** building on **Mill Street** for lots of tricks and treats!
Children of all ages will be delighted with **Dorothy** and her friends from the **Land of Oz** as they tour our "**Haunted House**." Activities start at **1:00 until 4:00**.
First there will be a tour of the Land of Oz then it's off on the **Ghost Walk** where you can get **treats** from local merchants. **Cost is one loonie per child.**

For more information contact Josey at **853-1031** or check us out on the Internet at www.downtownacton.ca

