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A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE, PUBLISHED MONTHLY TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY, AND ART

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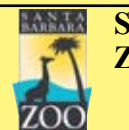
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This Month's Theme: "Biodiversity"



ORIOLE

Every Species Counts

By Sally Isaacson and Joan Evans, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

Question: What is Biodiversity?

Answer: Biodiversity refers to all of the different kinds of life forms, or living organisms, in a particular area. Natural, wild environments usually have higher biodiversity than areas that have been disturbed or polluted.

Question: Why is it important for people to protect individual species and preserve biodiversity?

Answer: Humans, like other species, depend on the diversity of life on earth for survival. Plants are the basis for all ecosystems as they make food through the process of photosynthesis. Food webs of natural ecosystems are very complex. If we are careless, we can easily disturb the delicate balance in which species exist.

We humans, by our actions, can cause large-scale extinction of species. Pollution of air, water, and soil as well as the introduction of foreign and invasive species of animals and plants are just some of the problems that humans have caused for the environment. Luckily, as we are intelligent, we can also find solutions to protect our local, regional, and global biodiversity. Each one of us can help, and one way to do this is to volunteer for a local conservation organization. Many organizations of the Santa Barbara Educators' Roundtable help to protect biodiversity. Look at the list on the side of this page for ideas of where you could volunteer.

Certain areas of the world are considered to be Biodiversity Hotspots because they have unusually high biodiversity. An organization called Conservation International (www.conservation.org) has identified 34 hotspot regions worldwide where 75 percent of the world's most threatened animals survive on about 2.3 percent of the Earth's surface. We live in one

of these hotspots. Scientists call this area the California Floristic Province and it is extraordinarily rich in species of plants, animals, and other types of living organisms.

When scientists want to measure the biodiversity of a natural area, they try to count as many different species of living things as they can find. This type of activity is carried out during BioBlitz events in different parts of the country. In May, a BioBlitz event (www.bioblitzsb.org) will be held at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Many scientists will be working for 24 hours to see how many different species they can find in a part of Mission Canyon. Families are invited to the Botanic Garden free of charge on Saturday, May 12 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. to join in the BioBlitz. This is a chance to learn about plants, animals, fungi, and more through many fun activities. There

will be different biologists at work, including botanists, entomologists, herpetologists, ornithologists, lichenologists, mammalogists, and mycologists.

In our area, biologists are working hard to protect many native species as well as their habitats. The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is a member of the Center for Plant Conservation, and the Garden's botanists work to conserve rare and endangered species of native plants. When you visit the Garden, be sure to look for the new plant conservation display. Local groups are working to protect and restore habitats and populations of native animals including Island Foxes, Southern Steelhead Trout, and Bald Eagles.



ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY



VALLEY OAK



CICADA



BADGER



TARANTULA



CHORUS FROG



TUFTED POPPY



ALLIGATOR LIZARD



MOUNTAIN LION



HOARY BAT

Word Scramble

Unscramble the words to find the names for different types of scientists who are interested in biodiversity. Find the answers below.

_____	I TOOCESLG	studies interactions between organisms and their environment
_____	TSNIBAO T	studies plants
_____	ALSAGMOMITM	studies mammals
_____	AOSOEICIRGTBLT	studies bacteria
_____	OLGOMOETISTN	studies insects
_____	SOIRLTOHEGETP	studies reptiles and amphibians
_____	OOTIYHPLGSC	studies algae
_____	IOZGOLSTO	studies animals
_____	TOTGOIHNROILS	studies birds
_____	OLIGOTMCSY	studies fungi
_____	ILOIRTOGCBOMIS	studies microscopic organisms
_____	TSALDRIAHNOGIOC	studies spiders
_____	GETLAI OOPNSTLO	studies fossils, past forms of life
_____	LSTECOIGNLIH	studies lichens
_____	CGOHYTTSOILIH	studies fish

Photos by Sally Isaacson.

Word Scramble Answers: ENTOMOLOGIST, ZOOLOGIST, PALEONTOLOGIST, PHYCOLOGIST, LICHENOLOGIST, MICROBIOLOGIST, MYCOLOGIST, ARCHINOLOGIST, BACTERIOLOGIST, BOTANIST, ECOLOGIST, ENTOMOLOGIST, HERPETOLOGIST, ICHTHOLOGIST, LICHENOLOGIST, MAMMALOLOGIST, MAMMALOLOGIST, MYCOLOGIST, RITHOLOGIST, PALEONTOLOGIST, PHYCOLOGIST, ZOOLOGIST.


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