

We do not understand with any precision how it is when the rains fall on the land the water is taken up by the plants, breathed back into the atmosphere allowing only a fraction to run into the rivers. Yet water is our most essential resource and our very survival depends upon knowing how plants use it and pass it on. Why do sycamores and cottonwoods grow in the Meramec flood plain and oaks and cedars on the bluffs above? We do not really know. Must we know? Indeed to live among the oaks and sycamores, cedars and cottonwoods, to walk amidst them, to breath the same air they breathe, to drink the same water, to depend upon them in every intimate way and upon the millions of plant relations, we must understand them.

In some way we must get across to the leaders of this great country of ours the absolute necessity for greatly increased attention towards understanding the living complexities of the habitat in which we live—a crash program to train young people in ecology, in the dynamics of the living landscape, with a capacity to make rational decisions concerning man's welfare. We urgently need the establishment of great centers of learning devoted to understanding the single most important thing ever given to mankind, the heritage of living things. The natural world around us is as much a part of ourselves as are our own children, or our own parents. Many people believe we are studying these things. We are; barely. Yet we need to do so with the passion and dedication with which we race for the moon. It is our lives and our children's lives and the lives of their progeny with which we are playing roulette; a game one cannot possibly win when played too long. We can only safeguard the future of mankind through understanding the natural history of the only planet upon which most of us will ever live. Help us to understand this magnificent green earth before it is too late.