

Abundant Toughness

What does nature really tell us about life?

As a young boy, I absorbed the message of the fledgling environmental movement by watching *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* on television. Today, a new “green” generation has been raised on PBS and BBC programs which universally reflect an unbiblical view of humanity and of its responsibility to steward the natural world.

A case in point is the visually stunning BBC television series *Planet Earth*. While each episode considers a different ecosystem, from the poles to the jungle rainforest to the deep ocean, the underlying theme is predictable: life on Earth is fragile—human population is growing, and this is a threat to wild animals that need our help if they and we are to survive.

If I set aside this extreme environmental mantra and watch the series through the eyes of a Christian biologist, I come to a rather different conclusion about life on Earth. Life is tough. Life is resilient. Life is abundant. For example, Antarctic Emperor Penguins walk almost 100 miles inland to their breeding grounds where the male penguin endures months of winter darkness with no food or water and temperatures down to -140 degrees Fahrenheit to incubate a single egg. Fragile? Not by any measure! In the baking heat of Death Valley, California, life lies dormant in the sand, ready to rebound into growth with the influx of seasonal rains. Mountain rains journey a thousand miles to the Okavango delta in Africa, transforming a portion of the Kalahari Desert into a lush swamp, able to sustain thousands of African elephants, zebra, and other species through the seasonal African drought.

Life is tough and life is resilient. And the sheer profusion of life on Earth is staggering! The shrimp-like ocean crustacean called krill are by weight the most abundant animals on earth. The mass of a single krill

species is estimated at half a billion tons. A fourth of the world’s land is covered in grass. Fueled by the sun, grass supports incomprehensible numbers of grazing animals worldwide. But even this abundance is dwarfed by the massive number of individual microscopic phytoplankton which turn hundreds of square kilometers of ocean green during a seasonal “bloom” and collectively produce three-fourths of all oxygen on Earth.

Such enduring toughness, marvelous resilience, and startling abundance of life are a surprise to people who are increasingly confined to urban areas and who continuously hear the message that life on Earth is frail and needs our help to survive. They are cut off

from a direct experience of the overflowing variety and abundance of life God has given us to draw on for sustenance and which He has charged us to steward. Without a biblical perspective, nature is reduced to landscape decorations and a tool for political indoctrination instead of a vibrant reflection of the power, creativity, and provision of a loving God. Sadly, the result has been a call to steward (control) the people and save the whales rather than the biblical imperative to save the people and steward the planet. 🕒

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

Editor’s note: We mistakenly printed an error in the last *Science & You* column, in the previous issue of *Uplook*. Titled “The Sound of Music”, the subheading should have read, “Is there more to it than meets the ear?”

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