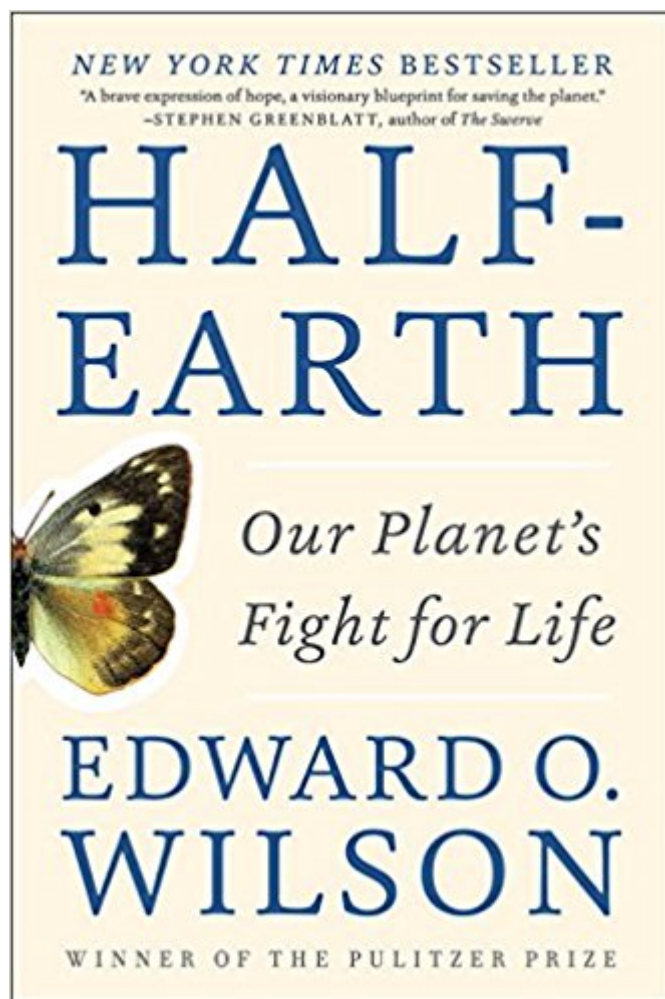


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# Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight For Life



## Synopsis

"An audacious and concrete proposal—Half-Earth completes the 86-year-old Wilson's valedictory trilogy on the human animal and our place on the planet." —Jedediah Purdy, *New Republic*

In his most urgent book to date, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and world-renowned biologist Edward O. Wilson states that in order to stave off the mass extinction of species, including our own, we must move swiftly to preserve the biodiversity of our planet. In this "visionary blueprint for saving the planet" (Stephen Greenblatt), *Half-Earth* argues that the situation facing us is too large to be solved piecemeal and proposes a solution commensurate with the magnitude of the problem: dedicate fully half the surface of the Earth to nature. Identifying actual regions of the planet that can still be reclaimed—such as the California redwood forest, the River basin, and grasslands of the Serengeti, among others—Wilson puts aside the prevailing pessimism of our times and "speaks with a humane eloquence which calls to us all" (Oliver Sacks). 25 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An audacious idea that might jump-start a lagging conversation about a burning issue—If *Half-Earth* takes us any closer to sparking greater effort, it will cement Wilson's already remarkable legacy." —Mike Weilbacher, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Wilson's passion for the planet shines through on these pages. He looks at life in its broadest, grandest sweep—Wilson is a thinker in the tradition of Alexander von Humboldt." —Matthew Price, *The National*

"Few experts have offered such an

exuberant and optimistic plan for dealing with [climate change] as biologist Edward O.

Wilson. The strength of his argument lies in his ability to elegantly unveil the bigger picture, and to define and examine what in our essential human nature has led us to this point. We need Wilson's reminder that we are not demigods, but are instead, as he puts it, a biological species tied to this particular biological world. - Jessi Phillips, Sierra "As an outline of our terrible ecological plight, it does a first-class job." - Robin McKie, Guardian

Edward O. Wilson is widely recognized as one of the world's preeminent biologists and naturalists. The author of more than thirty books, including *The Social Conquest of Earth*, *The Meaning of Human Existence*, and *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Wilson is a professor emeritus at Harvard University. The winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, he lives with his wife, Irene Wilson, in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Edward O. Wilson is angry, and so is his book. No one is listening and things have gotten unbelievably worse. There's no evidence to provide any real hope. He describes future paleontologists easily identifying the sedimentary layers of our era by the amount of chemicals and plastics in the soil strata, by the fragments of machines and weapons everywhere, and the lack of varied species identified. This is our legacy. As I have written elsewhere, it took the Earth four billion years to reach the Holocene, an era where climate, ice, water and life achieved a state of pleasant equilibrium, with jet streams and ocean currents arranged in a virtuous circle. In just the last 150 years, *Homo sapiens* has upset the entire system, killing off the Holocene in favor of the Anthropocene, in which one invasive species rules, and any other species that does not add to its immediate benefit can be eliminated. And if even if it does add to its benefit, if it hasn't been domesticated, it can still face extinction. We are clear-cutting the biosphere. The book is a relentless, hardhitting indictment of our custodianship. We are far worse than negligent; we are malevolent. We think it does no harm to remove a species from its environs and its role. The way it really works, Wilson says, is there are no species living on the periphery; every species depends on other species or is critical to their survival. Our total disregard of this simple rule causes unpredictable disaster. Wilson has been a naturalist all his long life, and it pains him to find things in this state. His childlike appreciation comes through, often overtaking his anger with the wonder of various species and how they live and contribute so differently. That we lose them daily

before we even know how they fit in is criminal to him. Wilson has introduced me to an ugly new subspecies. I will call it the Anthropocene Apologist. AA appears to be a subset of scientists and ignorant people whose attitude is yes, we've already wrecked this planet, so let's just take what we want now and not worry about it. AAs say we should welcome all the invasive species because they fill gaps left by species we made extinct. That they will figure out what to do about the mess when the time comes. It infuriates Wilson. He keeps bringing it up in different contexts, probably because after a lifetime of watching the degradation, he can't believe there are actual AA scientists promoting it. His solution is to set aside far more than the 15% now dedicated to wilderness areas and parks. He says we need 50%. This is obviously not going to happen, as populations explode at the same time as land mass disappears (in the rise of the oceans), and less of what's left is habitable. The book ends very weakly with a plea: Do no further harm to the biosphere. David Wineberg

E.O. Wilson is above all a man of very great compassion and love of life in every shape or form. Together with his encyclopedic knowledge, scientific mindset and plain, direct style, makes for very pleasant reading, even though the subject must upset every thinking person. I wish everyone would read it and act on it, pressuring governments to take concrete steps to hold the warming trend to the degree possible today. . Wilson's proposal is backed by great scholarship and the kind of common sense acquired in years of field work . He has walked on many of the areas he now urges us to protect. We should heed his calling.

Very nice summary of our current near catastrophic environmental situation by perhaps the greatest living biologist Edward Wilson. He makes a strong case for leaving a significant portion (half) of the earth to nature, otherwise we will lose a critical mass of species. It is written in kind of an extended essay format, and can be read quickly, but he includes many references for deeper reading. A companion book might be "Extinction: A Radical History" by Ashley Dawson.

Wilson's explanation of biodiversity at the micro level and how that supports the larger species is truly revelatory. We ignore his knowledge and wisdom at our own peril.

This proposal has very unique qualities. Not only does it not require more government action but also, it is still achievable today! We all need hope for without some sense of hope the way forward seems preposterous. Wilson affords the possibility of hope, but humans as he points out so

eloquently, often put their heads in the sand and refuse to look at reality. I found this story very revealing in its emphasis on the interrelationships within nature that hold our Earth together in a most unique and complex manner.

E.O. Wilson is a treasure for mankind. His perspective is advice for every human of every place in life. How very tragic that the mass of our species does not know its place on this planet or this universe. There is nothing to assure that this genetic anomaly will not just stun this planet into a disaster with genetic informational losses like book burning--future possibilities truncated by utter ignorance Wilson bemoans.

E.O. Wilson has an inspiring idea. I expected it to be preachy and unrealistic, but I like it a lot. The chapters are actually stand-alone essays about a wide range of creatures great and tiny, written by a naturalist with enthusiasm that is so contagious that even the idea that brings the topic together seems not unrealistic at all. I have already gifted copies of the book because I like it so much.

I've always been an Ed Wilson backer, since the year I was a no-account pass-through grad student in 1970. This book rambles through reams of lecture-gloss and technophilia, but shines with the wisdom that we are of the biosphere, and not in charge of it. We are far from knowing enough to exert neo-con control of a semi-synthetic planet. Like he says, let's do no more harm.

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