

Biodiversity is the key to the proper functioning of Earth's biosphere – the very core layer that grants us our existence. The variety of creatures and vegetation – small and large, young and old – are corner stones to maintaining the balance of all life. Every single life form has its purpose in the big picture and is an irreplaceable part of the ecological puzzle. The diversity of ecosystems provides the right niche and physical environment for specific biological communities of interacting organisms. Hence they are essential to life itself.

Old-Growth Forests are one of these enormously important ecosystems. For the sake of this survey, I will furthermore express a few thoughts of why Old-Growth Forest is important to me.

But first and foremost, let me be clear about one fact:

Old-Growth Forest has its own inherent and intrinsic value and must be protected for its very own worth !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To this end, any value we as humans place upon any part of nature is arbitrary and irrelevant. Respect for nature, appreciation for every biotic and abiotic component within, and the precautionary principle should be our driving forces in any dealings with the environment. Yet, we seem to think it is our birth right to decide about the fate of everything – alive or dead. Fully aware that this is the wrong approach, I will share a few of my anthropocentric views on why Old-Growth Forests are of utmost significance.

- Old-Growth Forests are global hotspots of biodiversity!
- Many animals and plants depend on fully functioning and undisturbed Old-Growth Forests for their existence!
- Old-Growth Forest is a crucial carbon sink!
- Old-Growth Forests provide environmental services that are essential to humans and all other life forms alike: clean water, clean air, protect soil from erosion, provide a stable climate and habitat. They also offer human-specific services: recreational value, anti-stress and mental health values and potential long-term revenue (if approached sustainably).
- Old-Growth Forests are simply awe-inspiring for all that they are – complex, silent, giant! As such they must be protected for the present and future generations.
- Old-Growth Forests are irreplaceable in any man's lifetime.
- We build expensive artificial museums to approach history and preserve the past of human development. Yet, the world's finest, first-class ancient witnesses of time we cut down without blinking. As Joni Mitchell puts it: *Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got, 'till it's gone. They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.*
- Old-Growth tree giants have lived for centuries and overtime have developed resilience to changes in the environment that might teach us a thing or two. Especially in the face of the drastic mass extinctions and climate change we've brought upon this planet, we may need to learn their ways of adapting.

I am a firm believer in the full protection of Old-Growth Forests (and every other ecosystem, for that matter). Hence I can suggest but one management strategy:

Leave the Old-Growth Forests alone!

Keep out of the remaining niches of Old-Growth Forest!

Protect what is left!

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