

# E. O. Wilson Quotes

*People, World, Science, Humanity, Thinking, Years, Animal, Religious, Ants,  
Mind, Land, Nature, Religion, Ecosystems, Diversity, Believe, Earth, Rest Of  
Life, Running, Two*

Destroying rainforest for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal.

~E. O. Wilson

Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction.

~E. O. Wilson

Look closely at nature. Every species is a masterpiece, exquisitely adapted to the particular environment in which it has survived. Who are we to destroy or even diminish biodiversity?

~E. O. Wilson

You teach me, I forget. You show me, I remember. You involve me, I understand.

~E. O. Wilson

We exist in a bizarre combination of Stone Age emotions, medieval beliefs, and god-like technology.

~E. O. Wilson

Destroying a tropical rainforest for profit is like burning all the paintings of the Louvre to cook dinner.

~E. O. Wilson

We should preserve every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity.

~E. O. Wilson

Perhaps the time has come to cease calling it the 'environmentalist' view, as though it were a lobbying effort outside the mainstream of human activity, and to start calling it the real-world view.

~E. O. Wilson

Competing is intense among humans, and within a group, selfish individuals always win. But in contests between groups, groups of altruists always beat groups of selfish individuals.

~E. O. Wilson

Sometimes a concept is baffling not because it is profound but because it is wrong.

~E. O. Wilson

Go as far as you can, [young scientists]. The world needs you badly.

~E. O. Wilson

There can be no purpose more enspiriting than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us.

~E. O. Wilson

Blind faith, no matter how passionately expressed, will not suffice. Science for its part will test relentlessly every assumption about the human condition.

~E. O. Wilson

We don't need to clear the 4 to 6 percent of the Earth's surface remaining in tropical rain forests, with most of the animal and plant species living there.

~E. O. Wilson

Humanity, in the desperate attempt to fit 8 billion or more people on the planet and give them a higher standard of living, is at risk of pushing the rest of life off the globe.

~E. O. Wilson

There doesn't seem to be any other way of creating the next green revolution without GMOs.

~E. O. Wilson

The world depends on fungi, because they are major players in the cycling of materials and energy around the world.

~E. O. Wilson

When you have seen one ant, one bird, one tree, you have not seen them all.

~E. O. Wilson

It's the technique, I think, of writing a novel that is difficult for a nonfiction writer.

~E. O. Wilson

The ideal scientist thinks like a poet and works like a bookkeeper

~E. O. Wilson

The search for knowledge is in our genes. It was put there by our distant ancestors who spread across the world, and it's never going to be quenched.

~E. O. Wilson

There is no better high than discovery.

~E. O. Wilson

Let us see how high we can fly before the sun melts the wax in our wings.

~E. O. Wilson

We use pandas and eagles and things. I'd love to see a wilderness society with an angry-looking wolverine as their logo.

~E. O. Wilson

I tend to believe that religious dogma is a consequence of evolution.

~E. O. Wilson

In the early stages of creation of both art and science, everything in the mind is a story.

~E. O. Wilson

We ought to recognize that religious strife is not the consequence of differences among people. It's about conflicts between creation stories.

~E. O. Wilson

True character arises from a deeper well than religion.

~E. O. Wilson

Ants make up two-thirds of the biomass of all the insects. There are millions of species of organisms and we know almost nothing about them.

~E. O. Wilson

Even as empiricism is winning the mind, transcendentalism continues to win the heart.

~E. O. Wilson

Ants are the leading removers of dead creatures on the land. And the rest of life is substantially dependent upon them.

~E. O. Wilson

Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius.

~E. O. Wilson

The human race is not divided into two opposing camps of good and evil. It is made up of those who are capable of learning and those who are incapable of doing so.

~E. O. Wilson

Overall, the human brain is the most complex object known in the universe - known, that is, to itself.

~E. O. Wilson

[Bacteria are the] dark matter of the biological world [with 4 million mostly unknown species in a ton of soil].

~E. O. Wilson

Without a trace of irony I can say I have been blessed with brilliant enemies. I owe them a great debt, because they redoubled my energies and drove me in new directions.

~E. O. Wilson

Only in the last moment in history has the delusion arisen that people can flourish apart from the rest of the living world.

~E. O. Wilson

Political ideology can corrupt the mind, and science.

~E. O. Wilson

Well, let me tell you, ants are the dominant insects. They make up as much as a quarter of the biomass of all insects in the world. They are the principal predators. They're the cemetery workers.

~E. O. Wilson

People would rather believe than know.

~E. O. Wilson

People respect nonfiction but they read novels.

~E. O. Wilson

One planet, one experiment.

~E. O. Wilson

To genetic evolution, the human lineage has added the parallel track of cultural evolution.

~E. O. Wilson

If everyone agreed to become vegetarian, leaving little or nothing for livestock, the present 1.4 billion hectares of arable land (3.5 billion acres) would support about 10 billion people.

~E. O. Wilson

If we were to wipe out insects alone on this planet, the rest of life and humanity with it would mostly disappear from the land. Within a few months.

~E. O. Wilson

Homo sapiens, the first truly free species, is about to decommission natural selection, the force that made us. Soon we must look deep within ourselves and decide what we wish to become.

~E. O. Wilson

By any reasonable measure of achievement, the faith of the Enlightenment thinkers in science was justified.

~E. O. Wilson

Humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life.

~E. O. Wilson

The human mind evolved to believe in the gods. It did not evolve to believe in biology.

~E. O. Wilson

Biodiversity is the totality of all inherited variation in the life forms of Earth, of which we are one species. We study and save it to our great

benefit. We ignore and degrade it to our great peril.

~E. O. Wilson

It's always been a dream of mine, of exploring the living world, of classifying all the species and finding out what makes up the biosphere.

~E. O. Wilson

Theology made no provision for evolution. The biblical authors had missed the most important revelation of all! Could it be that they were not really privy to the thoughts of God?

~E. O. Wilson

Theology made no provision for evolution.

~E. O. Wilson

Ants have the most complicated social organization on earth next to humans.

~E. O. Wilson

Far more important throughout the rest of science is the ability to form concepts, during which the researcher conjures images and processes by intuition.

~E. O. Wilson

The work on ants has profoundly affected the way I think about humans.

~E. O. Wilson

So important are insects and other land-dwelling arthropods that if all were to disappear, humanity probably could not last more than a few months.

~E. O. Wilson



One difference between ants and humans is that while ants send their old women off to war, humans send their young men.

~E. O. Wilson

Science and technology are what we can do; morality is what we agree we should or should not do.

~E. O. Wilson

I doubt that most people with short-term thinking love the natural world enough to save it.

~E. O. Wilson

We need freedom to roam across land owned by no one but protected by all, whose unchanging horizon is the same that bounded the world of our millennial ancestors.

~E. O. Wilson

The extinctions ongoing worldwide promise to be at least as great as the mass extinction that occurred at the end of the age of dinosaurs.

~E. O. Wilson

The ant world is a tumult, a noisy world of pheromones being passed back and forth.

~E. O. Wilson

Old beliefs die hard even when demonstrably false.

~E. O. Wilson

I was a senior in high school when I decided I wanted to work on ants as a career. I just fell in love with them, and have never regretted it.

~E. O. Wilson

To know how scientists engage in visual imagery is to understand how they think creatively.

~E. O. Wilson

It's always been a great survival value for people to believe they belong to a superior tribe. That's just in human relationships.

~E. O. Wilson

Jehovah had nothing to say to Moses and the others about the care of the planet. He had plenty to say about tribal loyalty and conquest.

~E. O. Wilson

Every major religion today is a winner in the Darwinian struggle waged among cultures, and none ever flourished by tolerating its rivals.

~E. O. Wilson

I think history has shown that the worst way to [try to] bring people over and actually change public opinion is by insult and applied degradation of them.

~E. O. Wilson

I grew up as a Southern Baptist with strict adherence to the Bible, which I read as a youngster.

~E. O. Wilson

To the extent that philosophical positions both confuse us and close doors to further inquiry, they are likely to be wrong.

~E. O. Wilson

Because the living environment is what really sustains us.

~E. O. Wilson

The education of women is the best way to save the environment.

~E. O. Wilson

In the attempt to make scientific discoveries, every problem is an

opportunity â€” and the more difficult the problem, the greater will be the importance of its solution.

~E. O. Wilson

The growth of a naturalist is like the growth of a musician or athlete: excellence for the talented, lifelong enjoyment for the rest, benefit for humanity.

~E. O. Wilson

We've got paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and god-like technologies.

~E. O. Wilson

Darwin's dice have rolled badly for Earth. The human species is, in a word, an environmental abnormality. Perhaps a law of evolution is that intelligence usually extinguishes itself.

~E. O. Wilson

The love of complexity without reductionism makes art; the love of complexity with reductionism makes science.

~E. O. Wilson

Religious beliefs evolved by group-selection, tribe competing against tribe, and the illogic of religions is not a weakness but their essential strength.

~E. O. Wilson

Religious belief itself is an adaptation that has evolved because we're hard-wired to form tribalistic religions.

~E. O. Wilson

In the process of natural selection, then, any device that can insert a higher proportion of certain genes into subsequent generations will come to characterize the species.

~E. O. Wilson

Our brain is mapping the world. Often that map is distorted, but it's a map with constant immediate sensory input.

~E. O. Wilson

I believe that traditional religious belief and scientific knowledge depict the universe in radically different ways. At the bedrock they are incompatible and mutually exclusive.

~E. O. Wilson

The variety of genes on the planet in viruses exceeds, or is likely to exceed, that in all of the rest of life combined.

~E. O. Wilson

Wonderful theory, wrong species.

~E. O. Wilson

In 2010, my two Harvard mathematician colleagues and I dismantled kin-selection theory, which was the reigning theory of the origin of altruism at the time.

~E. O. Wilson

Much of good science and perhaps all of great science has its roots in fantasy.

~E. O. Wilson

The true evolutionary epic, retold as poetry, is as intrinsically ennobling as any religious epic.

~E. O. Wilson

It may be argued that to know one kind of beetle is to know them all. But a species is not like a molecule in a cloud of molecules-it is a unique population.

~E. O. Wilson

Every kid has a bug period... I never grew out of mine.

~E. O. Wilson

Secular humanists can sit around and talk about their love of humanity, but it doesn't stack up against a two-millennium-old funeral high mass.

~E. O. Wilson

If history and science have taught us anything, it is that passion and desire are not the same as truth.

~E. O. Wilson

In a purely technical sense, each species of higher organism-beetle, moss, and so forth, is richer in information than a Caravaggio painting, Mozart symphony, or any other great work of art.

~E. O. Wilson

The cutting of primeval forest and other disasters, fueled by the demands of growing human populations, are the overriding threat to biological diversity everywhere.

~E. O. Wilson

Evolution by natural selection is not an idle hypothesis. The genetic variation on which selection acts is well understood in principle all the way down to the molecular level.

~E. O. Wilson

Genius is the summed production of the many with the names of the few attached for easy recall.

~E. O. Wilson

No species ... possesses a purpose beyond the imperatives created by genetic history ... The human mind is a device for survival and

reproduction, and reason is just one of its various techniques.

~E. O. Wilson

In many environments, take away the ants and there would be partial collapses in many of the land ecosystems.

~E. O. Wilson

People need a sacred narrative. They must have a sense of larger purpose, in one form or another, however intellectualized. They will find a way to keep ancestral spirits alive.

~E. O. Wilson

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