

## Chapter 1

# *Reconciliation Ecology*

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb  
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid.  
*Isaiah xi,6*

Today, the dominant strategy of conservation biology is reservation ecology — save the natural habitats of the earth! But, as you will see later in this book, the science of diversity tells us that the current balance of conservation efforts will not work any longer. In many environments, we have already saved about as much as we can.

Certainly we must not abandon what we have saved. We must continue to protect it. But increasingly, we should turn to a relatively new strategy, one I call '**Reconciliation Ecology**'.

Reconciliation Ecology seeks environmentally sound ways for us to continue to use the land for our own benefit. It follows the Chinese sage who said long ago, "The careful foot can walk anywhere." Hence, Reconciliation Ecology also promises to reduce the endless bickering and legal wrangling that characterize environmental issues today. We are all human beings. We share a stake in the world we are building. No one wants it to be bleak and lonely. And no one wants us to destroy our technology and reduce our future to the harsh, subsistence-level lives led by our stone-age forbears. Reconciliation Ecology gives us a conservation strategy that recognizes these simple truths and unites us in our common goals.

---

But what exactly is Reconciliation Ecology? It is **the science of inventing, establishing and maintaining new habitats to conserve species diversity in places where people live, work or play**. I am not suggesting inventing new habitats in reserves, or in acreage where restoration is going on. I am saying that people now use most of the world's land surface, and we can use it better. We can use it in a way that reconciles our needs with those of wild, native species. Reconciliation Ecology is the third 'R' of conservation biology.

We can learn how to reconcile our own use of the land with that of many other species. Maybe even most of them. If they have access to our farmfields, our forests, our city parks, schoolyards, military bases, timberlands, yes, even to our backyards, then they have a chance. If they live where we do, then they have what we have. We shall thus be able to minimize their extinction.

To practice Reconciliation Ecology, we must pay close attention to the things that we do

to the land. We must back off a bit — not on the amount of land we take for ourselves — but on how we transform it for our use. Right now, our footprint's too big. Going barefoot's not the answer. But the time has come to trade in our jackboots for ballet slippers. The careful foot can walk anywhere.