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Editor's Corner - On the Importance of High School Biology: A Note from the Assistant Editor for Biology

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On the Importance of High School Biology: A Note from the Assistant Editor for Biology

Biology is life: human life, animal life, plant life, protozoan life. Its importance should never be underestimated! Why, then, are there so many students entering my university courses with no knowledge of high school biology whatsoever? It is unthinkable that a person can complete high school without having had a course in *the* life science.

How are they to know that we are not alone on this planet? How are they to appreciate the so subtle nuances of a small pond, a corn field, a stream or a marshland? How can they read of waste problems and really understand, without a knowledge of ecological balance, ecological advantage or community competition? Without a reasonable acquaintance with biology, they can never conceive of the importance of 7.2 million square miles of continuous tropical forest in South America, the greatest watershed in the world.

A knowledge of biology, taught with concern as it is in Iowa, can help eliminate unnecessary wild animal killings or pet abuse. We all know at least one horror story about pet treatment. With this knowledge, students can make rational decisions about the killing of baby seals, farm rights, whale kills per nation or the protection of wolves and eagles.

Finally, what about the absolute thrill of learning how plants and animals work, live and adjust to environmental and social stress? This is particularly important in a state that is mostly rural and close to its animal and plant neighbors. Looking out the window at goldfinches or snowbirds is more thrilling when the student understands something of their biology, lifestyle and nesting habits.

I did not intend this comment to become philosophical or, indeed, trite. My intention is stimulation to all science teachers throughout Iowa. The universities and their faculties are on your side. But, please, don't let your students graduate without having a course in biology. And let us know about some innovations you use to teach your course.

--N.M.D.