

Land Use Patterns and Impacts on the Biota of Virginia: Symposium Introduction

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On May 24, 1991, a symposium entitled "Land Use Patterns and Impacts on the Biota of Virginia" was held as a part of the 69th Annual Meeting of the Virginia Academy of Science. At this symposium, held at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA, 17 papers were presented dealing with a variety of factors which have influenced and continue to influence the biological component of Virginia.

Sponsored by the Biology section of the Academy, this symposium was well attended and, judging from the discussions that developed during that day, well received.

The following 12 papers represent the proceedings of this symposium. These papers address a range of factors that have influenced, and are influencing the biota of Virginia. Among these are geological events, evolutionary events, and ecological events. In any context, change, whether the result of natural or man influenced processes, continues to shape Virginia's biological communities. Our scientific community, our citizenry, and our lawmakers need to understand these processes of change and their consequences to the well-being of organisms and communities of organisms. This must occur before effective steps can be implemented to slow or reverse deleterious trends.

As the papers that follow in this proceeding will demonstrate, there is a distinct need to emphasize the preservation of habitat in addition to the preservation of species. Habitat preservation will, in general, protect and preserve the associated species. Failure to maintain acceptable habitats will certainly result in the loss of these same species. Wetlands preservation, though currently in a state of disarray because of changing regulatory definitions, represents a significant step toward maintaining suitable habitats. Other types of habitat deserve consideration as well.

We in Virginia are fortunate to have so many talented, dedicated and knowledgeable scientists who are interested in the environment. This proceedings gives an overview of some of the areas that are being studied. It is our belief that a decennial look at the environment and the effects of land use would be useful. This would parallel the once a decade report that is made on the endangered species of Virginia.

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