O. Wilson wrote, “As more species ecosystems are weakened leading species become rare or extinct their ecosystem. Further, when endemic with other species and contributes every species forms interactive webs one another, what is clear is that varied ways species interact with fully understanding the many and Although biologists are far from small like the field across the road. Ecosystems can be large interdependent species as these communities of interacting complexity. Biologists refer to fungi, and microorganisms forming of specific plants, animals, algae, fungi, and microorganisms forming interconnected webs of infinite complexity. Biologists refer to these communities of interacting interdependent species as ecosystems. Ecosystems can be large like the Amazonian Rain Forest or small like the field across the road. Although biologists are far from fully understanding the many and varied ways species interact with one another, what is clear is that every species forms interactive webs with other species and contributes to the health and resiliency of the ecosystem. Further, when endemic species become rare or extinct their ecosystems are weakened leading to the decline of other species. E. O. Wilson wrote, “As more species become rare or go extinct the rate of extinction of the survivors accelerates.”

THE PROBLEM
We are creatures of the biosphere, as interdependent on it as any other species. Again, from Wilson, “Biodiversity is a shield protecting each of the species that together compose it, ourselves included.” This shield, that has for so long protected the human family, is now being threatened by changes in the environment we are causing. It is diversity of the biosphere we need to set aside for nature half of the surface of the earth. He has estimated this will sustain about 85% of the existing species. To date, conservation initiatives have protected about 15% of the land area and 6% of the seas. These efforts have helped a great deal but are woefully inadequate for the scale of the problem. In Wilson's view we need to aim higher and embrace a "conservation moonshot.”

Closer to home there are things we can do. First, it is important as pikes of brush, stone, compost, and leaves. Planting native wild flowers and allowing some of our lawns to grow into meadows can also help. If any of these look messy or unkept, we can rethink our aesthetics. These initiatives become home to a great variety of life and in this way have their own beauty.

We can join organizations that promote ecological stewardship. At the local level there are the municipal Conservation Commissions, Friends of the Mad River, and the North Branch Nature Center. At the State level there are many environmental non-profits including the Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Natural Resource Council, and the Trust for Public Land. At the international level there is the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and others.

Finally, vote. Vote for candidates who take these issues seriously, who are committed to evidence-based policies, and who appreciate that our natural heritage is an essential legacy for our children and all the children who will follow.

ETHICS
In the end, whether or not to save our rich natural heritage or turn toward an uncharted more human-centric future is an ethical question. Conserving our natural heritage will require a sustained commitment and, at times, certain sacrifice where we put the interests of others—of other species and other generations—ahead of our own.

Some things are hard to do but are worth doing because of their essential goodness. The Ancient Greeks thought well of doing good. Plato believed “the good” was the source of virtue, and virtue the source of happiness.

The empirical evidence is clear: We have the ability to change the biosphere. This gives us an almost god-like power to determine the fate of other species who share the world with us. Maybe, then, it just comes down to this: What kind of god do we want to be?