Readings and study questions for the lecture of April 27, 2004


Study Questions:

1. Describe the three levels of biodiversity.

2. Why is the current decline in organism diversity troubling? Why should we care?

3. Describe the four major threats to biodiversity.

4. What changes did the White House Council on Environmental Quality demand the Environmental Protection Agency make to the EPA’s 2003 draft Report on the Environment? What was the EPA’s response?

5. In February of 2003, why did an EPA official leak the EPA’s draft report on mercury air emissions from coal-fired power plants to the Wall Street Journal?

6. What do 8% of the women in this country have in their blood that could lead to reduced IQ and motor skills in their offspring? Whose study indicated this?

7. The Pentagon report written by Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall explores a worst-case scenario for a possible abrupt climate change that would dramatically reduce the Earth’s carrying capacity and, therefore, de-stablize the geo-political environment, leading to war. Why is there a danger of an abrupt climate change?

8. Given current rates of usage, how long is the world’s supply of oil expected to last? How long is the supply of all fossil fuel expected to last? What are the most viable alternatives to fossil fuel? Does the exhaustion of fossil fuel pose a threat to biodiversity?