

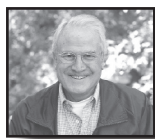
# Kids' Planet...

with Thorne Ecological Institute



## DEEP ECOLOGY

by Dr. Oakleigh Thorne, II



In a previous article, I wrote about Ecology and some of the Principles of Ecology that we find operating on our Planet Earth. Now I would like to tell you about *Deep Ecology*, a term that was invented by Arne Naess, a philosopher from Norway. While visiting California and camping in Death Valley, he and his friend George Sessions made a list of Basic Principles of Deep Ecology that they felt would give people a good idea of just what makes this way of thinking special and important.

The first Principle says that the well-being of both human and nonhuman Life on Earth has its own special value. That is, every living thing on the Earth is important and needs to be respected, whether it be an ant, a cactus, a worm, a bird, or a human. All have equal value. All have a right to live and be respected, regardless of whether they are useful to humans or not. The richness and diversity of the various life forms, what we call "biodiversity," contribute real value to the World. Humans have no right to reduce this diversity by our activities, unless it is for a vital need... something that we must have in order to survive...such as food or water. In other words it's OK to eat another animal or plant if we are about to starve to death. Otherwise we should respect the life of these other beings and not



harm them. They have their own intrinsic value and a right to be here. This is the main premise of Deep Ecology.

In an excessive manner humans are interfering with the nonhuman world and the situation is rapidly worsening. The flourishing of human life and cultures as well as the flourishing of nonhuman life requires a decrease in the human population on Earth. This, of course, from our own selfish point-of-view, is a very controversial Principle of Deep Ecology. There are some religions that tell us instead to have many children.

Policies, therefore, must change. Such changes will, of course, affect our economy and technology, but they will also affect our way of thinking. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. We will learn to appreciate life quality rather than chasing higher and higher standards of living and the amassing of material possessions. We will learn to live more simply. There will be a deep awareness of the difference between big and great! We can live a great and full life without having a big house and lots of "things" to go in it.

We can learn to enjoy nature, music, art, conversations with

family and friends, watching the sunrise or sunset, and the stars. We can enjoy cooking, sewing, planting a garden (even in pots or planters), and other simple hobbies and interests. We can be kind to each other and care about all the creatures of the Earth. By

simplifying our lives, we can become more peaceful and happy.

Deep Ecologists say that if we agree about these points, we have a duty to directly and indirectly try to bring about the necessary changes. They feel that this is the only way we can save the Earth from the greed of and destruction by humans. They make a good point. Think deeply about it!

*Dr. Thorne is founder and honorary president of Thorne Ecological Institute in Boulder. For more information about their classes for children, check out [www.thorne-eco.org](http://www.thorne-eco.org), or you can e-mail [info@thorne-eco.org](mailto:info@thorne-eco.org) or call (303) 499-3647.*



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