

An Xmas Tidbit

Contributed by Tom Murphy
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Christmas books are so cool. I received *Going Rouge- Sarah Palin- An American Nightmare* from my daughter this year and in it I found this tidbit. Pgs 55 to 56. What's missing from most discussions about endangered species is that preserving other species IS NOT AN ACT OF CHARITY (our emphasis);

it's essential to our survival. "Endangered species issues are usually seen as humans versus nature—We act in favor of one species or the other--- and that's just not the case", says Aaron Bernstein, a fellow at the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard and an editor (with Eric Chivian) of *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*. "Polar bears hold tremendous value to medicine, for example", explains Bernstein. "There is something about the metabolism of female polar bears that allows them to put on tremendous amounts of fat before winter but not become type 2 diabetic. We don't understand how they do it yet, but this research is hugely important for the tens of millions of people who suffer from type 2 diabetes." But human dependence on other species is even broader. "We need [ants] to survive, but they don't need us at all," notes naturalist E. O. Wilson in a quote Bernstein and Chivian include in *Sustaining Life*. Without ants (and countless other underground species that will never be the subject of impassioned environmental appeals) to ventilate the soil, the earth would rot, halting food production. Without trees and other elements of a healthy forest, water supplies would shrink. Take away coral reefs and you destroy the bottom of the marine food chain. Global warming is on track to make as much as one-quarter of all plant and animal species on earth extinct by 2040, threatening general ecosystem collapse. The study the natural world is to realize, in the words of the environmental axiom, that everything is connected. What we do to polar bears, we do to ourselves. *Going Rouge* is edited by Richard Kim and Betsy Reed and this article segment was contributed by Mark Hertsgaard, the environmental correspondent at the *Nation* and author of five books. It is a segment from the Chapter, "Our Polar Bears, Ourselves", pg 53. Even for non believers of global warming, the extinction of this one species (which can absolutely be measured) alone is a tremendous loss to medicine and human health. You can pick up *Going Rouge* at World Eye Book Store in downtown Greenfield.