Learning to Coexist

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Chapter 1

What Is this Book?

When you really sit down and think about it, the amount of diversity in the world around us is legitimately very surprising. While we often like to portray nature as this harmonious place, the fact of the matter is that it is full of strife, competition, predation, disease, resource limitations, and so on. And as many early ecologists realized, if you have a bunch of creatures naively competing for the same resources, whoever is the best at it just wins, and the rest disappear.

Yet, here we are, in a world where there are more species than we know how to count — all coexisting. Given our own questions about ecological stewardship more or

less boil down to questions about coexistence between our-
selves and the creatures we share this how with; rather
than trying to reinvent the wheel, why not learn from the
master herself?

As such, this book is nothing more than an attempt to
collect and understand the tools and strategies by which
Mother Nature has achieved this extraordinary feat. If
we can use the tools that nature has used to create the
diversity we see around us, I think we stand a pretty good
chance of learning how to properly coexist ourselves.

But to do so, we first have to understand those tools,
and, as I always say, you only truly understand something
when you can teach it to someone else. So... onto the zoo.

Part I

The Zoo