



Counting Species: Biodiversity in Global Environmental Politics

Rafi Youatt

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Three decades of biodiversity governance has largely failed to stop the ongoing environmental crisis of global species loss. Yet that governance has resulted in undeniably important political outcomes. In *Counting Species*, Rafi Youatt argues that the understanding of global biodiversity has produced a distinct vision and politics of nature, one that is bound up with ideas about species, norms of efficiency, and apolitical forms of technical management.

Since its inception in the 1980s, biodiversity's political power has also hinged on its affiliation with a series of political concepts. Biodiversity was initially articulated as a moral crime against the intrinsic value of all species. In the 1990s and early 2000s, biodiversity shifted toward an association with service provision in a globalizing world economy before attaching itself more recently to the discourses of security and resilience.

Even as species extinctions continue, biodiversity's role in environmental governance has become increasingly abstract. Yet the power of global biodiversity is eventually always localized and material when it encounters nonhuman life. In these encounters, Youatt finds reasons for optimism, tracing some of the ways that nonhuman life has escaped human social means. *Counting Species* compellingly offers both a political account of global biodiversity and a unique approach to political agency across the human–nonhuman divide.



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