

**Americans and Biodiversity:
New Perspectives in 2002**

Questionnaire and Topline Results

For



Biodiversity Project

Life. Nature. You. Make the connection.

February 2002

BELDEN RUSSONELLO & STEWART

RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS

National Survey on Biodiversity

Interviewing conducted January 2 through 16, 2002.

N = 1500 adults 18 years old and older.

Margin of sampling error is ± 2.5 percentage points.

Data have been weighted by race and age.

Percents may add to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

* indicates less than 1% , -- indicates zero.

Hello, my name is _____ and I am an interviewer with _____. We are conducting a public opinion survey and your telephone number was selected at random. We are not selling anything. May I please speak to the person 18 years old or older in your household who had a birthday most recently?

1. Thinking about the near future, do you think your personal financial situation will be better, worse, or about the same in a year from now?	BETTER.....	48%
	WORSE.....	7
	ABOUT THE SAME.....	43
	DON'T KNOW.....	2
	REFUSE.....	*

Thinking about environmental issues, please tell me how serious a problem you think each of the following is. Use a scale of 1 to 10 where one means something is not a problem at all and 10 means it is an extremely serious problem:

	% Saying 10 "Extremely Serious Problem"	
	2002	1996*
2. Air pollution	22%	24%
3. Water pollution	22%	25%
4. Toxic waste	24%	36%
5. Global climate change	14%	15%
6. Loss of rain forests	25%	35%
7. Overconsumption of resources in the United States	19%	23%
8. The rate at which land is being developed and places in nature are being lost	26%	33%
9. The rate at which plant and animal species are becoming extinct	19%	25%
10. Damage being done to oceans	19%	N/A
11. Damage being done to forests here in the United States	19%	N/A

* Percent saying "very serious problem"

	2002	1996
12. In your opinion, is the quality of the environment in the United States currently improving, getting worse, or staying about the same? Is that a great deal or somewhat (better/worse)?		
	GREAT DEAL IMPROVING....	4% 4%
	SOMEWHAT IMPROVING ...	15 20
	ABOUT SAME.....	40 40
	SOMEWHAT WORSE.....	25 19
	GREAT DEAL WORSE.....	15 15
	DON'T KNOW.....	1 2
	REFUSE	* --

	2002	1996
13. Have you ever heard about the loss of biological diversity, or biodiversity?		
	YES	30% .. 19%
	NO.....	68 80
	DON'T KNOW.....	2 1
	REFUSE	* *

14. In your own words, how would you define the loss of biological diversity, or biodiversity? (2002 BASE N = 476, 1996 BASE N = 381)

	2002	1996		2002	1996
Loss of species	33%	45%	Ecosystem services/Medicines ...	3	5
General environmental answers	9	4	Blending of species	2	2
Loss of habitat.....	4	7	Decreasing gene pool	1	7
Balance of nature/Ecosystems ...	3	9	Cloning/Stem cell.....	1	n/a
Variety of plants and animals	3	5	Kinds of life co-existing	*	1
Miscellaneous	16	11			
Don't know	24	17			

15. The Federal Endangered Species Act protects the land and water where endangered plants and animals live. Which of these comes closer to your viewpoint: **A.** We should reduce the number of plants and animals covered by the Endangered Species Act because the list is too long and protecting so many hurts the economy; **or B:** We should maintain a strong Endangered Species Act because protecting many different kinds of plants and animals is important to the environment and the economy.

2002 1996
STRONGLY A) REDUCE.....9% 9%
SOMEWHAT A) REDUCE..... 11 12
SOMEWHAT B) MAINTAIN .26 26
STRONGLY B) MAINTAIN...52 50
DON'T KNOW.....3 2
REFUSE * *

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (strongly or somewhat)

		Strngly agree	Smwt agree	Smwt disagree	Strngly disagree	DK
16. What I do in my life does not impact the health of natural habitats, those places in nature that are home to plants and animals.		25%	19	21	32	3
17. It is often not worth the cost in jobs to try to save endangered species, like spotted owls and snail darters.	2002	12%	20	28	35	5
	1996	17%	25	27	26	6
18. The world would not suffer if some species, like poison ivy and mosquitoes, were eliminated.	2002	22%	16	26	30	5
	1996	29%	20	23	23	4
19. Increasing protections for natural habitats and wildlife will result in too many government restrictions on individuals and local communities.		20%	27	26	23	3
20. There is so much land that is undeveloped, it is unlikely that we could do lasting damage to the earth in our lifetimes.		12%	11	19	56	1
21. We should loosen up environmental regulations on mining and drilling for oil in the U.S. because we need these resources for national security.		24%	23	20	29	3
22a. We have a personal responsibility to the earth to protect all plant and animal life. (BASE N = 750)		69%	23	4	3	*
22b. We have a moral responsibility to the earth to protect all plant and animal life. (BASE N = 750)		65%	24	7	3	1
23. We do not need to worry so much about environmental problems because new technologies will help us solve most of them.		8%	14	26	50	2
24. One of the most important things to me, in my life, is living in a world with a wide variety of plants and animals. (BASE N = 750)		64%	26	7	2	1
25. Nature provides me with inspiration and peace of mind. (BASE N = 750)		71%	23	4	2	*

	2002	1996
26. The term biodiversity refers to the variety of living plants and animals in the world. Maintaining biodiversity means preventing the extinction of plants and animals. How important is maintaining biodiversity to you personally? Very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?	VERY IMPORTANT.....47% SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT...42 NOT VERY IMPORTANT.....8 NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT.....2 DON'T KNOW.....* REFUSE.....*41%4693**

	2002	1996
27. From what you have heard, would you say the number of plant and animal species in the world is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?	INCREASING8% DECREASING67 STAYING THE SAME.....23 DON'T KNOW.....2 REFUSE.....*6%69223*

Please think of a 1 to 10 scale. This time 1 means something is not at all a reason to you personally and 10 means it is an extremely important reason to you personally to care about protecting the environment: Here's the first one: How important is this to you personally as a reason to care about protecting the environment?

	2002	1996
28. Nature is God's creation and humans should respect God's work	56%	67%
29. A respect for nature for its own sake <i>1996: "The belief that all life found in nature has a right to exist"</i>	47%	55%
30. A personal responsibility to leave the earth in good shape for future generations	58%	71%
31. An appreciation of the beauty of nature	53%	63%
32. A desire to protect the balance of nature for you and your family to enjoy a healthy life	51%	59%
33. A desire, as an American, to protect our country's natural treasures and natural history <i>1996: "As an American wanting to protect the natural resources and beauty of this country"</i>	47%	58%

34. If you could choose only one of these six reasons, which one would you say is most important to you personally as a reason for you to care about protecting the environment: a) nature is God's work, b) respect nature for its own sake, c) to protect the balance of nature for you and your family to enjoy health, d) appreciation for nature's beauty, e) responsibility to future generations to protect the earth, and f) to protect America's natural history.
(ROTATE ORDER IN QUESTION)

A) GOD'S WORK..... 23%
B) RESPECT NATURE..... 10
C) PROTECT BALANCE 17
D) APPRECIATION FOR
BEAUTY 6
E) FUTURE GENERATIONS 39
F) PROTECT NATURAL
HISTORY 4
DON'T KNOW..... 1
REFUSE *

How important is each of these reasons for maintaining biodiversity—very important, somewhat, not very, or not at all important?

	Very import	Smwt impor	Not very	Not at all	DK
35. Marshes, forests, rivers, and streams are nature's tools for cleaning the air and water we rely on. By destroying these habitats, humans are endangering the services that nature performs for us.	74%	23	1	1	1
36. New medicines to treat diseases like cancer, heart disease, and hypertension are derived mostly from plants and animals. (BASE N = 750)	72%	21	2	1	3
37. Only five percent of all plant species have been studied for their potential use. We need to preserve the variety of species to find out how they can help us. (BASE N = 750)	58%	35	5	1	1
38. Forests in the U.S. are important because they clean our drinking water.	72%	22	2	2	2
39. Forests improve our lives by giving us quiet spaces and beautiful landscapes.	61%	33	4	1	*
40. Habitat protection is essential because habitats are home to so many species of plants and animals. Save one habitat and you have saved hundreds of species.	65%	30	3	1	*
41. Human activity kills dozens of species of life everyday.	47%	39	6	4	5
42. The diversity of plants and animals is part of our national wealth that we should safeguard for national security. We will be weaker as a country if we must rely on a limited number of plants and animals to supply our food, create our medicines, and produce other products.	58%	33	6	2	1
43. We need strong protections to ensure that our natural treasures in the US are not destroyed. SPLIT SAMPLE A: Every two years forest land the size of the state of Massachusetts is destroyed in the eastern U.S. (BASE N = 750)	62%	29	4	2	3
44. We need strong protections to ensure that our natural treasures in the US are not destroyed. SAMPLE B: Right now only fourteen percent of forests in the eastern U.S. are permanently protected from development. (BASE N = 750)	59%	32	5	2	1

	2002	1996
45. How important is maintaining biodiversity to you personally? Very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?	VERY IMPORTANT	55% ..48%
	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT .	39 44
	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	4 5
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT ...	1 2
	DON'T KNOW	1 1
	REFUSE.....	* *

Please rate how effective each of the following is as a way for individuals to help protect biodiversity? Very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective or not at all an effective way for individuals to help protect biodiversity.

	Very effective	Smwt effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	DK
46. Stop using pesticides on gardens and lawns because the pesticides end up in rivers and streams and contaminate drinking water.	57%	31	7	3	1
47. Buy fewer consumer goods, because it reduces the demand on natural resources.	27%	48	15	7	3
48. Only eat fish that were caught or farmed in a way that protects the oceans and rivers.	37%	40	13	7	4
49. Buy organic fruits and vegetables, because they do not require pesticide use on the land, even if they cost a little more to buy.	36%	41	15	7	2
50. Skip a car trip once a week, and walk or bike instead.	40%	39	12	6	2
51. Do not buy a house in a new development that was previously farmland or forest areas.	23%	33	24	16	4

52. Now, thinking about what you, yourself might do or not do, if there was an issue relating to the environment that you cared about, would you be more likely to: (ROTATE A,B,C)	DONATE..... 7%
	WRITE LETTER 17
	PAY A LITTLE MORE 22
	ALL THREE..... 39
	NONE OF THE ABOVE..... 12
	DON'T KNOW 2
	REFUSE *
a. donate money to an environmental or conservation organization,	
b. send a letter, e-mail, or call a public official,	
c. pay a little more for products that are friendlier to the environment,	
d. all three, or	
e. none of the above?	

Now here are some types of actions that government can take to help protect biodiversity. Please tell me how effective you think each type of action would be to help protect biodiversity: very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective: Have the government...

	Very effective	Smwt effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	DK
53. Buy privately-owned forests and other land to protect them from development.	43%	38	10	7	2
54. Strongly enforce regulations that limit development that destroys habitats.	53%	38	6	3	1
55. Toughen the enforcement of anti-pollution laws on business and industry.	59%	31	6	3	1
56. Offer more tax incentives to encourage consumers to use environmental and energy saving products.	46%	39	8	5	1
57. Offer tax incentives to encourage private property owners and farmers to keep natural areas from being developed.	47%	40	7	4	2

Now I have a few questions for statistical purposes only.

D1.	Do you or someone else in your household own a pet?	YES.....61%
		NO39
		DON'T KNOW*
		REFUSE*
<hr/>		
D2.	How often do you read a daily or Sunday newspaper? Rarely, once or twice a week, two to four times a week, or five to seven times a week?	RARELY21%
		ONCE OR TWICE20
		TWO TO FOUR TIMES16
		FIVE TO SEVEN.....41
		DON'T KNOW1
		REFUSE*

Which of the followings activities have you yourself actively participated in the last 12 months:

	Yes	No	DK
D3. Hunting	16%	84	*
D4. Bird watching	42%	58	*
D5. Cross country skiing	5%	95	*
D6. Down hill skiing	10%	90	*
D7. Fishing	39%	61	*
D8. Hiking	49%	51	*
D9. Camping overnight	38%	62	*
D10. Worked in your own vegetable or flower garden	62%	37	*
D11. Gone to a zoo or an aquarium	57%	43	*
D12. Gone to a national or state park for recreation	69%	31	*
D13. Gone to a museum	58%	42	*
D14. Gone to the beach or lake	75%	25	*
D14a. Mountain-biking	15%	84	*
D14b. Snowboarding	5%	94	*
D14c. Snowmobiling	5%	94	*

Which of these have you ever done? Have you ----? IF YES: Did you happen to do that in the last 12 months? (ROTATE D15-D19)

	Yes recently	Yes, not recently	No	DK
D15. Made a contribution to any environmental organization or conservation group?	32%	14	53	1
D16. Written to the editor of a magazine or newspaper?	14%	13	73	*
D17. Written, telephoned, or visited an elected official about an issue or some matter of public business?	29%	13	58	*
D18. Change what you do as a consumer by paying a little more for products that are friendlier to the environment?	59%	6	31	3
D19. Performed volunteer work for an environmental or conservation project in your community?	19%	12	68	*

		2002	1996
D20. Do you think of yourself as an active environmentalist, or sympathetic toward environmental concerns but not active, or neutral, or generally unsympathetic to environmental concerns?	ACTIVE.....	12% ...	11%
	SYMPATHETIC.....	61	65
	NEUTRAL.....	20	19
	UNSYMPATHETIC	5	3
	DON'T KNOW	2	1
	REFUSE	--	2

D21. Do you use the Internet at home or at work?	YES.....	66%
	NO	33
	DON'T KNOW	*
	REFUSE	*

D22. Are you married, living with a life partner, divorced, separated, widowed, or single that is, never been married?	MARRIED.....53% LIVING WITH PARTNER.....5 DIVORCED.....9 SEPARATED3 WIDOWED7 SINGLE.....23 DON'T KNOW.....* REFUSE*
D23. Do you have any children younger than 18?	YES37% NO.....62 DON'T KNOW.....* REFUSE1
D24. How often would you say you attend services in a church or synagogue or elsewhere -- more than once a week, about once a week, at least once a month, a few times a year, less often than that, or never?	ONCE A WEEK.....43% ONCE A MONTH13 FEW TIMES A YEAR.....22 LESS OFTEN10 NEVER.....11 DON'T KNOW.....* REFUSE*
D25. Are you registered to vote at your current address?	YES87% NO.....13 DON'T KNOW.....1 REFUSE*
D26. Did you happen to have a chance to vote in the 2000 Presidential elections?	YES76% NO.....24 DON'T KNOW.....* REFUSE*
D27. Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else? [ROTATE DEMOCRAT, REPUBLICAN, INDEPENDENT]	DEMOCRAT35% REPUBLICAN27 INDEPENDENT22 SOMETHING ELSE.....10 DON'T KNOW.....3 REFUSE3

D27b. [IF INDEPENDENT, ASK] Do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party? [ROTATE REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRAT]	LEAN REPUBLICAN 10% LEAN DEMOCRAT 10 DON'T KNOW 9 REFUSE 3
--	---

D28. In terms of your political outlook, do you usually think of yourself as very conservative, somewhat conservative, middle of the road, somewhat liberal, or very liberal?	VERY CONSERVATIVE 12% SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE 29 MIDDLE OF THE ROAD 30 SOMEWHAT LIBERAL 19 VERY LIBERAL 7 DK 4 REFUSE 1
---	--

D29. Which of the following best describes the place where you live: a large city, a suburb near a large city, a small city or town, or a rural area?	LARGE CITY 19% SUBURB 20 SMALL CITY/TOWN 36 RURAL AREA 23 DON'T KNOW 1 REFUSE *
---	--

D30. Do you own or rent your home?	OWN 67% RENT 31 DON'T KNOW 1 REFUSE 1
------------------------------------	--

D31. What was the last grade of school you completed? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES UNLESS NEEDED]	LESS THAN HS 7% HS GRADUATE/GED 29 SOME COLLEGE/2 YR DEGREE 27 4 YR COLLEGE 23 POST GRADUATE WORK OR DEGREE 13 DON'T KNOW * REFUSE *
--	--

D32. In what year were you born?	18-24	13%
	25-34	19
	35-44	22
	45-54	18
	55-64	11
	65+	16
	DON'T KNOW.....	*
	REFUSE	*

D33. Would you say you are white, black or African American, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, or something else?	WHITE	73%
	BLACK	11
	HISPANIC.....	11
	ASIAN.....	3
	SOMETHING ELSE.....	1
	DON'T KNOW.....	*
	REFUSE	1

D34. Stop me when I come to the category in which your household income fell before taxes in 2000: (READ CATEGORIES)	Less than \$10,000	9%
	Between \$10K and 25,000	16
	Between \$25K and \$35K.....	15
	Between \$35K and \$50K.....	18
	Between \$50K and \$75K.....	16
	More than \$75K	15
	DON'T KNOW	3
REFUSE	9	

Gender	MALE.....	47%
	FEMALE	53
