is merely a formal attempt to emphasize the obvious; the second, that it is a legitimate enterprise but must be deferred until we know a lot more than we do. I cannot help being reminded of Pepys' account of Charles II scoffing at the men of Gresham College wasting their time trying to weigh air. This chimerical business, we should note, led to the discovery of oxygen, the founding of modern chemistry, and plant and animal physiology a century later.

It may clear matters somewhat to modify the usual definition of ecology as the science of interrelation between life and environment. Actually it is a way of approaching this vast field of experience by drawing upon the *best information available* from whatever source it may come, with precise experimental control where possible, of course, as in the superb watershed studies of Herbert Bormann and his associates. But one cannot, for example, interpret the ecology of a deciduous forest, an urban complex, or the East African plains, while ignoring their history, despite the imperfections of the record. Geology, too, has had to face this problem and survive skepticism, which is confined today to the Fundamentalists.

The fact that a great deal of ecologically indispensable work is being done by those who do not call themselves ecologists does not validate an indictment of the profession as incompetent to deal with anything more significant than goldfish bowls.

It is the special responsibility of the ecologist to discover, assemble, and interpret whatever is pertinent and sound. Often, as by Frederic Clements, Sir Arthur Tansley, Patrick Geddes, and Charles C. Adams, this charge has been powerfully and effectively met.

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Linear Algebra Problem

With respect to Bosch's article "Redwoods: A population model" (23 Apr., p. 345), I wish to inform Bosch, the editors of *Science*, and its referees that they have all just failed elementary linear algebra (see Technical Comments, p. 435).

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