



# AAAS NEWS AND NOTES

edited by Coimbra Sirica

## SCIENCE PROFILE

### Peter Raven to Focus on Raising Profile of AAAS

Many members of AAAS may have had their first look at Peter H. Raven in 1987, when he gave the association's keynote address at the annual meeting in Chicago. In a talk entitled "We're Killing Our World: The Global Ecosystem in Crisis," Raven warned that ignorance, poverty, and greed "are eradicating the lands and organisms that sustain life on this planet."

The key to proper management of the world's ecosystems "lies in an awareness of and compassion for all life," Raven told members of the association almost 15 years ago. A botanist and director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, Raven said in his address that the developing countries needed debt relief and training in forestry and sustainable agricultural, and he chastised the developed world for not giving more food aid and technical assistance. Biodiversity is Raven's passion and he goes far in defining what threatens its survival and what will assure its vigor.

And when Raven talks about his future role as president of AAAS in 2001, he seems as intent on promoting the organization's qualities as he is on describing the beauty of nature.

"We want to establish in people's minds that AAAS offers considerable benefits, representing science to many different audiences and involving itself in areas of great interest to the scientific community," said Raven, in a recent interview. "The organization needs to confront how best to increase its visibility as a membership organization."

After he found out he had been elected president, Raven made the rounds of AAAS, stopping in to talk to program officers and trying to find out as much as he could about the activities of the organization.

He is particularly "proud" of the role AAAS's Directorate for Education and Hu-

man Resources Program is playing in improving science education, and in the recruitment and retention of women and minorities in the sciences.

"What I want to promote is the quality of opportunity so that individuals can pursue a variety of different roles," Raven said. "We can't maintain our scientific enterprise without doing a far better job of recruiting, retaining, and embracing African Americans, Hispanics, and members of other minority groups."



Peter H. Raven

Raven's international work, which has focused in particular on building the capacity of other countries for sustainable development, has also given him a strong sense of solidarity with an international community of scientists. His work explains his interest in AAAS's Science and Human Rights Program and in the organization's work building bridges among scientific communities worldwide.

"I think all international cooperation has to do with mutual respect," Raven said. "If we want to build a sustainable world, we need to develop international relationships. We must become partners for managing the planet together."

Scientists in the United States must be sensitive also to the culture of their own country, said Raven, which AAAS reflects in its willingness to address "the interplay between science and

religion."

"I am proud that AAAS is willing to consider ways in which the two can complement each other," Raven said. "This is crucial for the future of science, as anyone knows who understands the character of the United States."

Raven grew up in San Francisco, where he began growing caterpillars into butterflies as a 6-year-old. His mother was a social worker and his father worked in the city water department. His scientific education began with guidance from staff at the California Academy of Sciences, where he became a student member when he was 8.

"My own experience is one of the reasons I am so interested in early science education and in the role of museums in encouraging people to pursue careers in science," Raven said.

In the April 26, 1999 issue of *Time* magazine, Raven was named a "Hero for the Planet," as part of the magazine's celebration of Earth Day. The words of *Time* writer Roger Rosenblatt may give AAAS members an idea of what is in store for them under Raven's leadership.

"His is one of those special minds that succeed with both the particular and general, with individual and collaborative pursuits," wrote Rosenblatt. "...he also developed a gift for bringing people together for worthwhile projects."

## AAAS

### Richard S. Nicholson to Retire

After 12 years of serving as Executive Officer of AAAS, Richard S. Nicholson has told the AAAS Board of Directors that he would like to retire from the organization as soon as a replacement has been named.

The board has established a search committee consisting of its current officers — president Mary Good, who will chair the committee, board chairman Stephen Jay Gould, and president-elect Peter Raven, as well as Floyd Bloom, who will be president-elect in 2001. Members are invited to send suggestions and recommendations to Mary Good, Chair of Search Committee, c/o Executive Office, AAAS, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20005.



Richard S. Nicholson