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Vignettes: Real Powers

Statistical studies have shown that the most diverse animals are not only small in size but also highly mobile, giving them access to the most bountiful variety of foods and other resources. The ultimate exemplars of this principle are the insects, so diverse and abundant that they project a popular image of near invincibility. (*In the nuclear aftermath a cockroach surveys the scorched landscape atop a blasted beer can.*) Entomologists are often asked whether insects will take over if the human race extinguishes itself. This is an example of a wrong question inviting an irrelevant answer: insects have already taken over.

—Edward O. Wilson, in The Diversity of Life (Harvard University Press)

... These thoughts reminded me of the contrast between the definition of "entomology" in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the official definition stated by the Entomological Society of America in 1966. Entomology as described by the encyclopedia is "the science that treats of insects." As stated by the society it is "the profession that controls insects."

So small a triumph as finding and listening to the Northern Bush Katydid brought to mind Edmund Burke's words in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, where he cautioned that those who make themselves most conspicuous are not necessarily the most important.

-Vincent G. Dethier, in Crickets and Katydids, Concerts and Solos (Harvard University Press)

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