

ology. They note that WHR2000 "simply assumes that system performance variation accounts for all [health] outcome variation after controlling for levels of [personal health care service] expenditure and education." Methods are needed for measuring the extent and effectiveness of prevention and protection programs. I suggest that until we have measurements and numbers to describe protection, we will not have, as Lord Kelvin said, "advanced to the state of Science." Nor will health policy-makers pay any attention.

ANTHONY ROBBINS

Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston, MA 02111, USA. E-mail: anthony.robbins@tufts.edu

References and Notes

1. See, for example, <http://www.fiocruz.br/cict/dis/verbra.htm>
2. WHO, *World Health Report 2000—Health Systems: Improving Performance* (WHO, Geneva, 2000).

Counting All Species

IN REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSAL BY THE ALL Species Foundation for a complete catalog of life on Earth, which is described in the News Focus article "Up for the count?" by A. Lawler (26 Oct., p. 769), I was quoted as saying, "This is well intentioned but in-

credibly naïve." The statement, out of context, could be misleading, so I would like to clarify my meaning.

The idea of a complete catalog of species is not new, and efforts related to specific taxa have been under way for some years. What is interesting about the new proposal is that it would include all taxa and take advantage of recent technological developments that could provide a quantitative leap in the area of systematics.

Therefore, what I view as naïve is not the all-species count itself, but attempting to accomplish it without taking into account the present political setting. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, signed in 1992 and ratified by 181 countries to date, established national sovereignty over biodiversity, which in effect restricts the free flow of biological specimens around the globe. The Convention also adopted the Global Taxonomy Initiative

(GTI), and thus any proposal for a complete catalog of life on Earth must work within this framework.

For the new proposal to succeed given such parameters, two criteria are essential. First, those developing countries where much of the biodiversity is found must have help in building up their taxonomic research capacity both technologically and academically. There are good examples where this is working, including InBio in Costa Rica, CONABIO in Mexico, and the Alexander von Humboldt Institute in Colombia. And second, this endeavor needs to be a truly global partnership, bringing together the systematists and institutions from around the world and giving them the tools and resources they need to work within this new global context.

CRISTIÁN SAMPER

Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Unit 0948, APO AA 34002-0948, USA. E-mail: samperc@tivoli.si.edu

"...what I view as naïve is not the all-species count itself, but attempting to accomplish it without taking into account the present political setting."



We're In It For The Science

The **National Cell Culture Center** is a non-profit resource sponsored by the NIH to support basic research by providing access to cell culture services at minimal cost. Working with the Center, your cell line or custom protocol is adapted for larger scale production. Cells or cell secreted proteins are delivered in the quantity and frequency you desire, enabling you to focus more of your valuable resources on fundamental research problems.

Thousands of scientists from every major research institution throughout the country have accessed the Center for their cell culture needs. Let us help you with your research. *Visit us on the web at www.nccc.com*

Sponsored by the National Center for Research Resources, National Institutes of Health.

National Cell Culture Center 
Dedicated to Supporting the Biomedical Research Community