Biodiversity in the Classroom; Incorporating the Teaching of Charles Darwin and Female Naturalists Developmentally

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Abstract

Enriching our scientific understanding of the biological world has been a major contribution of naturalists. However, while contributions from individuals such as Charles Darwin are both well-known and taught, those of female naturalists remain relatively unknown and have not entered curriculum. This absence means fewer options available to teachers which could address an increasingly diverse student population. Confounding this gap is the time and resources allotted by secondary schools for molecular biology and medically-oriented labs which are useful, but not always essential for natural history or biodiversity studies. Given this background, this paper suggests that funds and support be divided between DNA labs and a movement towards “environmental-science era” enrichment. This would allow classes to incorporate personalities, lessons, and observations of key naturalists and natural histories. Thus, teaching the how and why of Darwin’s becoming a naturalist, followed by stories of female naturalists responds to diversification of the student body and more directly matching curriculum to pressing national needs. Thus, prior to making their conclusions, students have been exposed to what is termed here “teaching developmentally,” so that they can see how these individuals became scientists.

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