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Helena vanVliet Architect, LLC
Restorative Biophilic Design

November, 2013

Biophilia is in The Wind

All of us at the [Biophilic Cities Launch](#) felt it. The rooms filled with ecologists, economists, designers, urban planners, and biodiversity coordinators from major world cities buzzed with energy carried by the knowledge, that biophilia is in the wind and gaining ground...

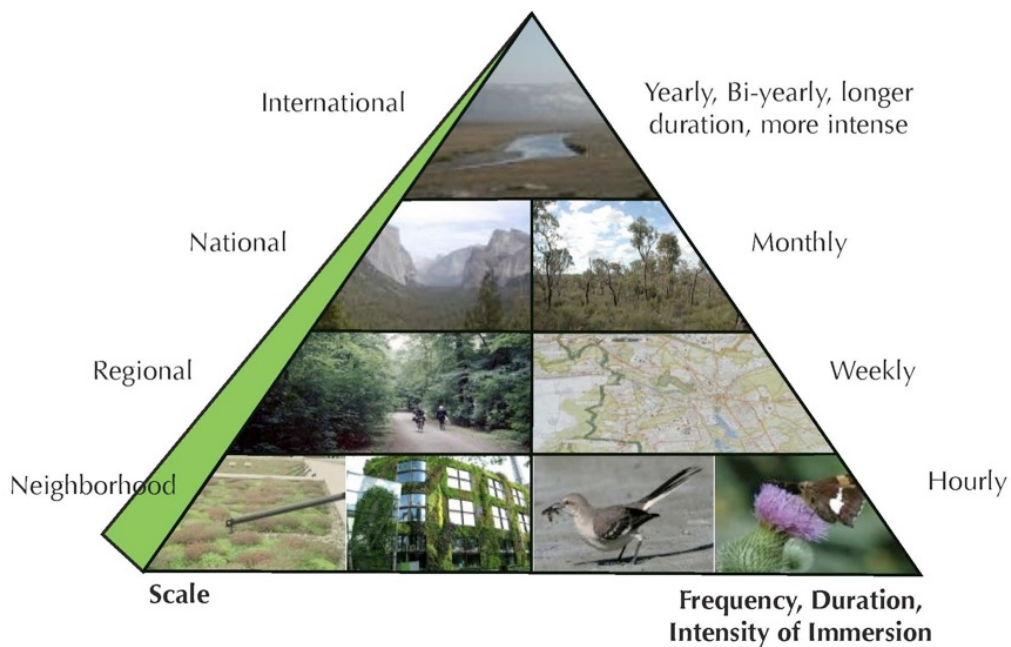
...And, perhaps more significantly, with the clear awareness, that creating beautiful, healthy habitats for humans is essential for our species' survival.



Launching the New Global Network of Biophilic Cities at UVA's School of Architecture's Center for Design and Health.

Keynote speaker **Stephen Kellert** underscored this point in his lecture about the importance of daily and abundant contact with the natural world.

THE NATURE PYRAMID



Concept by: Tanya Denckla-Cobb

Akin to the "Nutritional Diet Pyramid," this is the "Green Diet Pyramid"...just as essential to our health and well-being! Graphic by Prof. Tim Beatley of the Biophilic Cities Project at the University of Virginia.

In Kellert's most recent book *Birtheright: People And Nature In The Modern World* (published 1/2013), he writes:

“Humanity is the product of its evolved relationship to nature, countless yesterdays of ongoing interaction and experience of the natural world. Our senses, our emotions, our intellect, and even our culture developed in close association with, and in adaptive response to, the nonhuman world.”

Because of this innate connection to nature, Kellert says that “our physical and mental health, productivity, and well-being continue to rely on our connections to nature, even as our world becomes increasingly fabricated and constructed.”



Biophilia at work at Monticello in the early 1800s: Rainwater-collecting raised walkway terraces overlooking and sheltering the West lawn. Photo by Helena van Vliet.

No More Concrete-Only Cities/Zoos

Look at the example of [how zoos have evolved](#) over the years. Initially they housed animals in concrete, metal and glass cubicle-like enclosures. Scientists noticed many of the animals exhibiting strange, neurotic, aggressive and anti-social behavior. The animals paced, hid, developed eating disorders, seemed severely stressed.

Today we understand that for animals to be healthy, happy and as well-adjusted as possible in zoos, we need to provide them with lush landscapes, cascading waterfalls and the plant life found in their native habitats.

What makes us think the same requirements are not essential for us?



Nature in the inner city (Cologne, Germany). Photo by Helena van Vliet.

Appreciating Nature in the City

All across the country cities are taking the same approach to getting close to nature as the zoos did years ago. Small urban spaces outfitted with sidewalk gardens are popping up, green roofs continue to catch on and natural storm water management systems offer the sanctuary of mini waterfalls throughout **cities dedicated to letting nature in.**



Portland's creative storm water management systems
(from Biophilic Cities Launch Site).



Urban rooftop garden (Aachen, Germany).
Photo by Helena van Vliet.

The Global Network of Biophilic Cities is a growing partnership project gaining recognition throughout urban communities. For more information [email me](#) or call me at: 610.935.3230.

Nature-Inspired News

For the first time in history, more people in the United States live in urban areas than in rural places: [Lessons from the Natural World](#)

[Improbable Journey: The story of New York's High Line \[video\]](#)

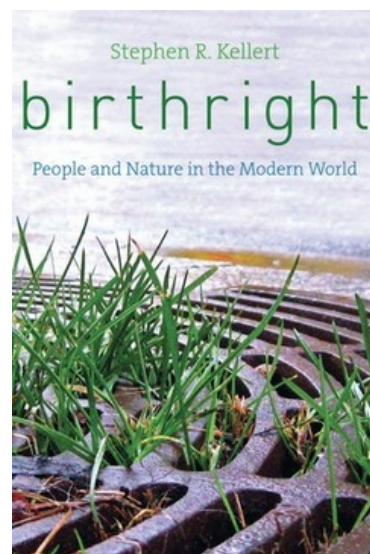
Recommended Reading

[Birthright: People And Nature In The Modern World](#)

by Stephen Kellert

From The Book:

Stephen Kellert asserts that man's ability to think, feel, communicate, create and find meaning is inextricably linked to his relationship with nature, and that modern challenges are directly related to today's disconnect from the natural world.



[Learn more](#) about **Building Places that Re-Connect with the Natural World**. For Land Planning, Architecture and Collaborative Design, please [email me](#) or call me at: 610.935.3230 for more information.

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