

# The Anthropocene: Nature's Final Bow?

**Michael Soulé**

*Professor Emeritus, Environmental Studies  
University of California, Santa Cruz*

Michael Soulé is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, where he served as Chair of the Department from 1989 to 2006. He was born, raised, and educated in California. After spending much of his youth in the canyons, deserts, and shores of San Diego and Baja California, teaching natural history to children at the Natural History Museum, and graduating from San Diego State, he drove his Hilman Minx to Palo Alto to study population biology with Paul Ehrlich, focusing on the evolution and variation of lizards on islands in the Gulf of California. After his PhD work at Stanford, Michael helped create the first university in Malawi. He has also taught in Samoa, the University of California at both San Diego and Santa Cruz, and the University of Michigan. He was Chair of the Environmental Studies Department at UCSC from 1989 to 1996. He has done field work on insects, lizards, birds, and mammals in Africa, Mexico, the Adriatic, the West Indies, California, and Colorado. He now lives near Paonia, Colorado with his wife Joli Soule.

Michael was a founder and first President of the Society for Conservation Biology and The Wildlands Network (formerly Wildlands Project). He has written and/or edited 11 books on biology, conservation biology, and the social and policy context of conservation, and has published about 175 articles on population and evolutionary biology, fluctuating asymmetry, population genetics, island biogeography, environmental studies, biodiversity policy, nature conservation, and ethics. He continues to publish on the roles of carnivores in policing ecosystems and the conflict between the biocentric and anthropocentric (development-focused) poles in conservation.

He is a Fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, and was the sixth recipient of the Archie Carr Medal. In 1998, he was named by Audubon Magazine as one of the 100 Champions of Conservation of the 20th Century. He is a recipient of the National Wildlife Federation's National Conservation Achievement Award for science, the recipient of the Conservation Medal for 2007 from the Zoological Society of San Diego, and was in the first class of recipients of The Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Pioneer Award in 2009.

Michael speaks and writes on nature conservation and on the origins and evolution of "sin" (self-biased or egoistic impulses) that can inform the meaning of human nature, the mission of conservation, and other life-affirming movements. Regarding the fate of nature (biodiversity), he is neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but a "possibilist," believing in the possibility that elements of Nature and wildness (such as large carnivores) will persist beyond 2035.