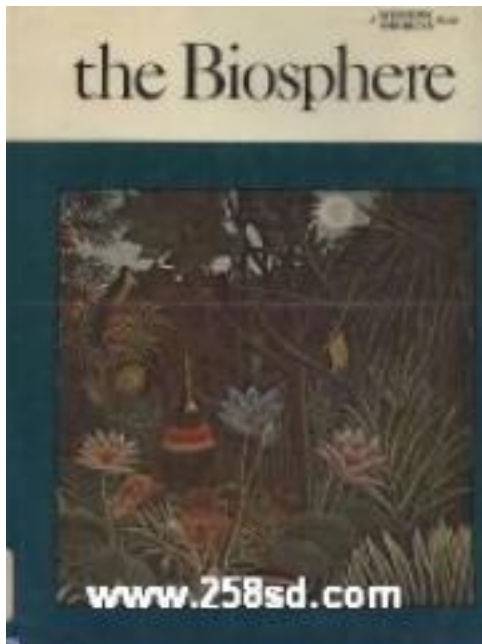


# Universe: Stars and Galaxies & CD-Rom & The Once and Future Cosmos



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Foreword  
Photographs of the earth show that it has a green-blue color. The planet acquired this pleasant distinction—it appears—after turning in the sun—light for about three billion years. Solar energy—arriving at its surface at the—rate of two calories per square centimeter per minute—ignited the processes—of life in the primordial waters. The earth—in consequence—soon became—endowed with an atmosphere of approximately its present composition. For—about a billion and a half years the mixtures and compounds of the principal—constituents of the air and water—the light elements carbon—hydrogen—oxygen and nitrogen—have been maintained in steady state by

cyclic passage through the tissues of plants—the animals that eat them—the and the decomposers of both. The biosphere—this thin film of air and water and soil and life—no deeper than ten miles—or one four-hundredth of the earth's radius—is now the setting of the uncertain history of man. The biosphere provides the context and perspective for consideration—in this book—of the questions that are clustered in public discussion in the United States today under the horizon-sweeping title of "Environment." The very word has become a term of reproach—and a millennial anxiety pervades the discussion. The classical Malthusian equation (in which production increases arithmetically in the numerator and human reproduction increases geometrically in the denominator) shows once again that population growth must outrun the means of subsistence. The same logic argues that industrial technology only hastens the despoliation of the earth's finite resources and makes survival meanwhile a dubious privilege. It is not enough to note the irony in the fact that such despair is characteristically to be found among the most fortunate members of the few national populations for whom the iron law of scarcity has been annulled. The mood requires examination from a bigger set of premises supplied by enlargement

作者介绍:

目录:

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