

What we have forgotten

In this video, natural scientist Janine Benyus tells us about what we've forgotten about the natural world.

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then watch the video and do the exercises. You can also read the transcript.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. competent
2. co-ordination
3. genius
4. gracefully
5. a myth
6. an organism
7. to occur to somebody
8. top-down

Definition

- a. a plant, animal or any other living thing
- b. an idea many people believe but which is not true
- c. imposed by an authority
- d. great natural ability or skill
- e. to come into somebody's mind
- f. in a pleasant and relaxed way
- g. the organisation of things so that they work well together
- h. able to do something well

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. According to the speaker, everyone used to know what she explains in the video.	True	False
2. The speaker describes spring as a chaotic competition between organisms.	True	False
3. When she mentions spring, the speaker suggests that humans do not always have the right priorities.	True	False
4. The neighbour thought the speaker had built the wasps' nest.	True	False
5. The speaker compares different organisms' activities to human activities to show how similar they are.	True	False
6. The speaker seems to admire human achievements more than she admires nature.	True	False

Task 2

Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

how	occurred	ones
rest	that	to

1. The of the natural world is doing things very similar
what we humans need to do.
2. We're not the first to build houses.
3. He asked me I had made the house.
4. It to me that he didn't know this.
5. If something was well done, we must have done it.

Discussion

What do you think of these ideas?

Transcript

If I could reveal anything that is hidden from us, it would be to reveal something that we've forgotten, that we used to know as well as we knew our own names. And that is that we live in a competent universe, that we are part of a brilliant planet and that we are surrounded by genius.

Imagine designing spring. Imagine the timing, the co-ordination, all without top-down laws or policies. This happens every year. There's lots of showing off. There's lots of love in the air. There's lots of grand openings. And the organisms, I promise you, have all of their priorities in order.

I have this neighbour, he came up to me. And there was a wasps' nest that I had let grow in my yard, and he asked me how I had made the house for those wasps, because he had never seen one this big. And I told him, the wasps actually made that. But it occurred to me: how had he already believed the myth that if something was that well done, that we must have done it?

How did he not know that we're not the first ones to build. We're not the first ones to process cellulose. We're not the first ones to make paper. We're not the first ones to try to optimise packing space, or to waterproof, or to try to heat and cool a structure. We're not the first ones to build houses for our young.

People are beginning to remember that other organisms, the rest of the natural world, are doing things very similar to what we need to do, but in fact are doing them in a way that have allowed them to live gracefully on this planet for billions of years.

Answers

Preparation task

1. h
2. g
3. d
4. f
5. b
6. a
7. e
8. c

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False

Task 2

1. rest | to
2. ones
3. how
4. occurred
5. that