

While we may

have the best intentions in reducing our impact on the natural environment, we need simpler and more elegant tools to better understand it. Design and technology are critical to overcoming the shocking realization that we really know very little about what surrounds us, and while the natural world may seem complicated and inscrutable, the EcoAtlas makes it easy and approachable.

It is scalable to any region, thereby making its potential for social, environmental, and economic impact profound. If information is power, the ability to reveal natural patterns in the face of the natural world's staggering complexity, can be deeply transformative when our livelihood and future depend on it.

The limited role of data visualization and information technology in addressing issues of sustainability, resilience, and environmental design means that the estimated \$40+ trillion value* of the natural world is invisible to most. Technology and information design have largely been absent in bridging this gap even though many of the environmental challenges can be understood and dynamically visualized through data interpretation. More than ever, the public is pre-disposed to do the right thing if it had better tools to help make better decisions.

The EcoAtlas could serve as a tool for design, urban planning, education, tourism, or conservation. For example, a landscape architect working in an unfamiliar region could sort through thousands of possibilities and immediately identify the best plant palette to create a resilient habitat; a city planner could plan for urban spaces that minimize water needs while also providing valuable open space that requires minimal maintenance and has year-round seasonal interest; a teacher with minimal environmental training could quickly teach students what birds and butterflies they are seeing on a field trip to a local park because the EcoAtlas anticipates which ones may be migrating through the region; a hotel could have its chefs design a seasonal menu for any global destination and could give its patrons an enlightened experience that celebrates the uniqueness of local ingredients; a homeowner could upload a plant list and visualize how it will change year round and what kind of maintenance it will need before committing to planting it.

The EcoAtlas facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the world in ways that are essential to building, not only a resilient and sustainable future, but an exciting and inspiring one.



- Roberto Rovira
Founder

www.ecoatlas.com

* "Accounting for Nature's Benefits: The Dollar Value of Ecosystem Services" by David C. Holzman; <http://bit.ly/EHPecosystemServicesValue>; Environmental Health Perspectives 2012 Apr; 120(4): a152-a157.