

# Editorial

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*S Mahadevan, Associate Editor*

It is that time of the year again for umbrellas, new books and cold remedies. For a nation whose economy is totally dependent on the rain gods, there is considerable anxiety when the monsoon does not progress as well as expected. This natural cycle of renewal is so crucial for all our water needs, be it irrigation or power generation. Fresh water, one of the most important natural resources on which our life and survival depends, is also something that we often take for granted, misuse and collectively abuse by contaminating our water bodies with sewage and toxic waste. Thousands of litres of precious ground water are used to irrigate lawns in the middle of the day when evaporation is at a maximum. Many of us in the cities happily hose down our cars and yards with fresh water pumped across hundreds of kilometres from the source, depriving the local inhabitants their natural resource. Even if we make giant strides in the science of weather prediction, this will only be of limited value unless we change our basic attitude towards water management. Many a World Environment Day may come and go. But unless we actively pursue conservation, preservation and rejuvenation of our water bodies, even a good monsoon may not be enough save us in the future.

The scientist featured in this issue, Ernst Mayr, was the *pithamaha* of evolutionary biology of the 20th century. During his eight decades of productive scientific career, Mayr was a crusader who championed many causes and fought many conceptual battles with other stalwarts in the field. Best remembered for his elucidation of the biological species concept, Mayr was also actively involved in the grand unification of the ideas of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel to give us a more comprehensive understanding of the way evolution works. In addition to articles outlining Mayr's contribution, a sample of his own inimitable style of writing is provided in the Classics section where he looks back on the developments in the field during his long inning.



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