

## Going, going ... gone?

The fate of biological diversity for the next 10 million years will almost certainly be determined during the next 50–100 years by the activities of a single species.

Paul Erlich and Robert Pringle.<sup>58</sup>

Imagine that we solve the more from less megatrend described in the previous chapter. Imagine a world where all people always have sufficient water, sufficient food, sufficient energy and sufficient minerals. In this world people have their nutritional, clothing, shelter, warmth and transportation needs met. However, this world has something missing. There's no wilderness. There are no wild plants or animals – just ones which have been domesticated for agriculture. There are no natural habitats – just human-built and managed spaces. There is no eagle which soars across the sky and there is no wombat which digs in the dirt. In this world, our physical needs are met but is there something we still need?

For many people – maybe most people – the answer would be 'yes'. Humans of all races have a deep cultural, emotional and spiritual need to coexist with other plant and animal species. And we share our world with an amazing variety of plant and animal species. Just how many different species exist isn't actually known with certainty. A recent study<sup>59</sup> by scientists from the University of Hawaii estimates the world has 8.7 million unique plant and animal species. Even more amazing is that 86 per cent of terrestrial species and 91 per cent of marine species haven't yet been formally described. So we don't even have a good idea of how most of the world's plant and animal species behave or what they look like.