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# A Qur'anic Account of Biodiversity

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## ABSTRACT

Species diversity has been the hallmark of biosphere and invaluable resource for human being as well as for the natural environment. In order to appreciate and conserve these diverse species, different values have been proffered from different frames of references. This study examines biological diversity from the Qur'anic perspective in an attempt to explicate the kinds of value conferred by the Qur'an on non-human species among the animals and plants. Collating ayat (verses) of the Qur'an related to nonhuman species and analyzing key conceptual terms the Qur'an employs in reference to their diversity, the study found that nonhuman species are presented in the Qur'an as signs of Allah (s.w.t) and as communities (*umam*) of worshipers worthy of existence and conservation.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM & METHODOLOGY

Nature and several constituents of biodiversity have been valued differently based on different value systems. In the age of materialistic, economic driven world, financial implication of biodiversity is one of the predominant value methods. There is strong support for the idea that biodiversity is intrinsically valuable and that it plays a pivotal role in maintaining ecosystem which is crucial to human life. The study analyses the value that the Qur'an assigns to biological diversity.

## CONCLUSION & FINDINGS

The Qur'an regards nonhuman species as communities of worshippers worthy of existence and conservation. They are valuable in themselves and provide aesthetic values and ecological services necessary for human well-being. Biological diversity is not accidental but purposeful, seen in the Qur'an as a prime indicator of the existence and unity of God. A world without animals drumming, birds singing and dancing, and plants watching, all through the courtesy of minerals – in a grand show of a divinely designed functioning system – would be too lonely, too unbearable for humans to live in. In this intricate web of coexistence and interdependence, we must learn to live and let live.



## SIGN IN DESIGN



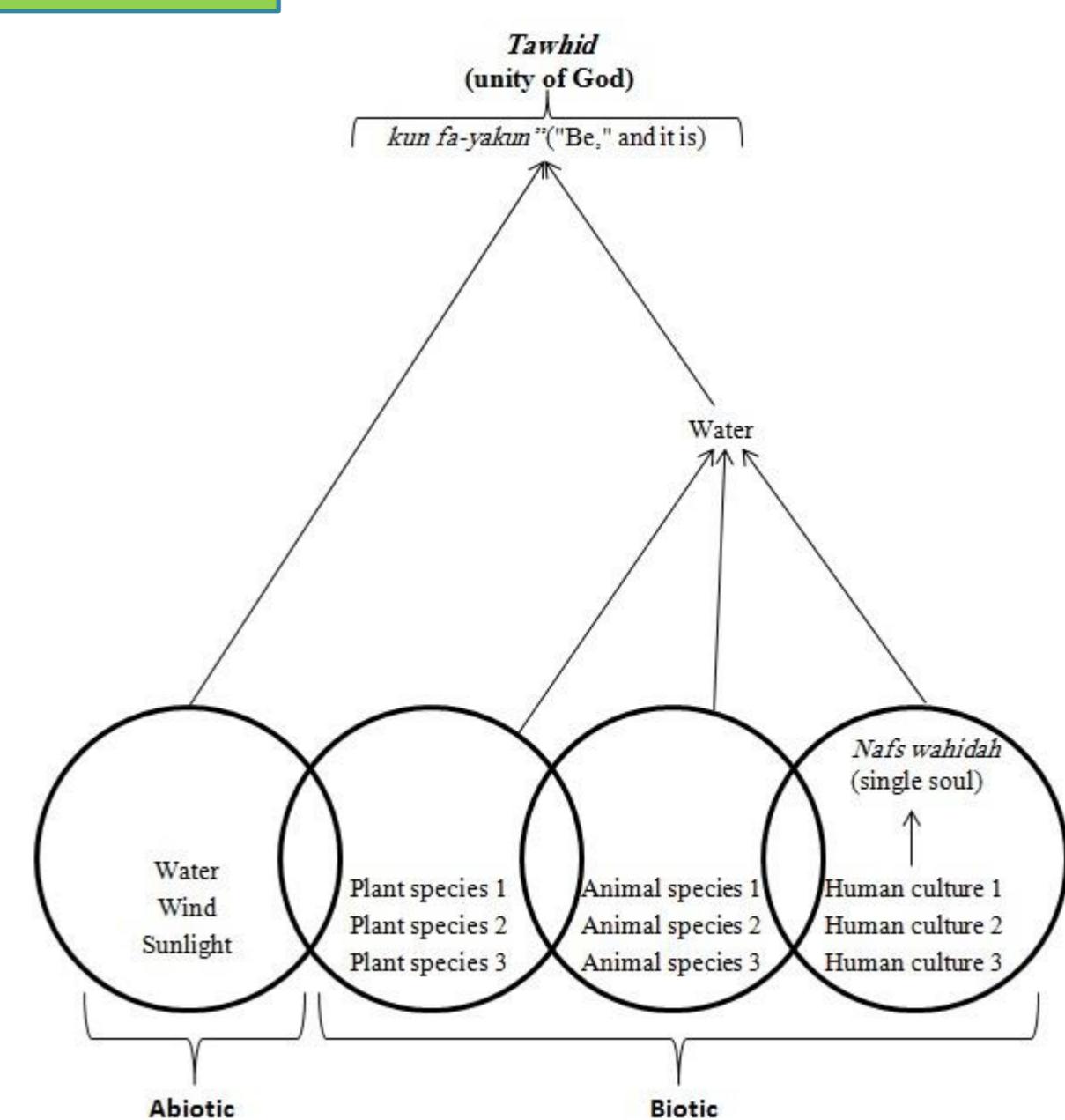
Bar-tailed Godwit



Arctic Tern

Of all known migrant species, birds, tracked through satellite transmitters, travel the farthest. Bar-tailed Godwit's migration is the longest known non-stop flight for any bird and also the longest journey without pausing to feed by any animal, covering more than 11,000km within 9 days. Arctic Tern migrates over 24,000km within 40 days (with some pause) or more than 80,000km annually.

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY



Unity of existence as exemplified in biosphere in realization of cosmic value

Human diversity in language, skin color and culture is traced back to a single soul (*nafs wahidah*) along with its pair (Qur'an, 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 39:6). Humans and nonhuman animals and plants of extremely diverse colors, shapes and tastes are reduced to water (Qur'an, 21:30; 24:45; 25:54). Animate and inanimate things are ultimately reduced to a single divine command of "*kun fa-yakun*" ("Be, and it is") (Qur'an, 2:117; 16:40; 36:82; 40:68). This ultimate unity in diversity is the cosmic value embodied in *tawhid* (unity of God) as manifested in the biosphere. Had there been other gods beside Allah, this cosmic contract of coexistence and interdependence would have disintegrated, leading to all-out war of all against all (Qur'an, 21:22; 23:91). Functioning as what could be termed as a Central Uniting Process (CUP), *tawhid* is at the pinnacle of the Qur'anic value of biodiversity. The unity of creation is presented in the Qur'an as the grand indicator of the unity of the Creator

## PUBLICATIONS

- ❖ The paper was presented at: 2013 2nd International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change (ICBCC 2013), 17th-18th Nov. 2013, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.
- ❖ The paper was published as "Valuing Biodiversity: A Qur'anic Account", *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development*, Vol 5, No. 3, pp. 244-250. DOI: 10.7763/IJESD.2014.V5.486.