

Ecology is the study of environmental systems, or as it is sometimes called, the economy of nature. "Environmental" usually means relating to the natural, versus human-made world; the "systems" means that ecology is, by its very nature, not interested in just the components of nature individually but especially in how the parts interact. Ecology is technically an academic discipline, such as mathematics or physics, although in public or media use, it is often used to connote some sort of normative or evaluative issue as in something is "ecologically bad" or is or is not "good for the ecology". More properly ecology is used only in the sense that it is an academic discipline, no more evaluative than mathematics or physics. When a normative or evaluative term is needed then it is more proper to use the term "environmental", i.e., environmental quality or "environmentally degrading". Most professional ecologists are not terribly unhappy when ecology is used in the normative sense, preferring the wider public awareness of environmental issues today compared to the widespread ignorance of three decades ago.