

two kinds or aggregates of individuals may be spoken of as distinct species, is involved in the title of this paper, "What is a species"?

The query is not an easy one to answer where very similar forms, and, in many instances, even where totally dissimilar forms are concerned. For it must be understood from the first that dissimilarity of form does not necessarily indicate distinctness of species in the broadest sense of the word. The late Charles Darwin wrote volumes dealing in one way or another with the subject. From his point of view, about the best definition that can be given a species is "an aggregate of individuals capable of producing, under natural conditions, progeny of their own form, through successive generations". That is the most exclusive sense in which the term can be used. But it is obvious that the difficulty of discussing how far that ability exists, or whether it exists at all, in a very large proportion of the multitudinous forms of organic life, has given rise to much of the past or existing controversy of the relationship of forms or kinds. The power of reproduction exists in very many instances between allied kinds generally admitted to be distinct species; generally speaking the more closely allied two species are, the more frequently will crosses between them be found in localities where the two live together. But amongst animals, with few exceptions, the reproductive power in such cases is not transmitted to the offspring. In other words, true hybrids, i.e., the progeny of crosses between different but allied kinds, are themselves infertile, or sterile, or, in the case of the few exceptions, they become sterile in the subsequent generation. This does not apply in the same way to plants, in which the means of perpetuation are very different, hybrids much more frequently fertile, and species still harder to define.

It happens that while some species are confined to very small areas, called "local species", others exist all over a continent, and are called "generally distributed" species.

Now, supposing it were possible to apply this reproductive test to all the various forms in different groups throughout, say, North America, it would be found that in some cases one species existed in much the same form wherever it was found, that is, that different individuals in the same district showed little or no variation one from the other, and that an individual or specimen from a district, say, on the east coast, differed in no essential characters from one from the west coast. Such is called a constant or non-variable species. In other species, individuals or "specimens" may be found varying much from others in the same locality, it may be in colour, size, relative dimensions of different parts, etc. Specimens so differing are