

A Study on the Importance of Wild Life

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Abstract – Wildlife is a precious gift of God to this planet. The term ‘wildlife’ not only caters to wild animals but also takes into account all undomesticated life forms including birds, insects, plants, fungi and even microscopic organisms. For maintaining a healthy ecological balance on this earth, animals, plants and marine species are as important as humans. Each organism on this earth has a unique place in food chain that helps contribute to the ecosystem in its own special way. But, sadly today, many of the animals and birds are getting endangered. The natural habitats of animals and plants are being destroyed for land development and farming by humans. Poaching and hunting of animals for fur, jewellery, meat and leather are other great factors contributing to wildlife extinction. If soon, no stringent steps are taken to save wildlife, it would not be long when they will find a place only on the list of extinct species. The extinction of wildlife species will certainly have a fatal impact on human race as well. So, for us as humans, it becomes a great responsibility to save the wildlife, our planet and most importantly, our own selves.

Keywords: Wild, Life, Animals

INTRODUCTION

The eco-system is all about relationships between different organisms connected through food webs and food chains. Even if a single wildlife species gets extinct from the eco-system, it may disturb the whole food chain ultimately leading to disastrous results. Consider a simple example of a bee that is vital for growth of certain crops due to their pollen carrying roles. If bees get reduced in numbers, the growth of food crops would definitely lower owing to lack of pollination.

Similarly, if a specie gets increased in number, again it can have an adverse effect on the ecological balance. Consider another simple case of carnivores which is getting reduced every day due to human poaching and hunting. The reduction of these carnivores is leading to increase in the number of herbivores who are dependent on forest vegetation for their survival. It would not be long, when the number of herbivores in forests would soar to such a great extent that they would move to agricultural lands and villages for their food needs. Thus, saving wildlife plays a great role in ensuring a check on the ecological balance thereby, maintaining a healthy eco-system.

A huge number of plants and animal species are used to benefit humans in one way or the other. Many of the medicines such as aspirin, penicillin, quinine, morphine and vincristine have been derived from uncultivated plants. If we talk about the ancient medicinal system of Ayurveda, it has also been using extracts and juices from various plants and herbs to cure problems like

blood pressure, diabetes and many other neurological problems since ages.

It's not only the plants which are useful, many of the extracts from animal species are rich in nutrients and anti-oxidants. For instance, the oil from liver of Cod fish is rich in Omega 3 and Omega 6 anti-oxidants that helps fight ageing, chemicals derived from shrimps and lobsters are used in treating fungal infections, venom of Cobra is used as a cure for leprosy and the list does not end here. Today, various species of animals are also being studied and researched upon to find cures to deadly diseases like cancers, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. If wildlife is not preserved today, there would soon be a time when human race would also be in great danger.

Human population largely depends on agricultural crops and plants for its food needs. Are you aware that wildlife plays a significant role in growth of these crops? If not, let's understand the concept. The fruits and vegetables that we get from plants are a result of a process called pollination, a reproduction system in plants wherein the pollen grains from male flower is transferred to the female flower, resulting in production of seeds. Now, for the pollination to occur, birds, bees and insects, which are few of the tiniest species on this planet, play an important role. It is through these insects and birds that the pollens are transferred between flowers as they move from one flower to the other. The crop growth can be significantly affected if the pollen carrying birds and insects are reduced in numbers for whatsoever reason.

IMPORTANCE OF WILDLIFE

Wildlife also plays a significant role in keeping the environment clean and healthy. Many micro-organisms, bacteria, slime moulds, fungi and earthworms feed on plant and animal wastes, decomposing them and releasing their chemicals back into the soil, thus, replenishing it with nutrients which in turn, are taken up by roots of plants enabling them to grow and develop.

Scientists and researchers are aggressively working these days to preserve plants and animals through 'Gene Banks'. These gene banks are a store house of cells and tissues of scores of wildlife species that play an important role in agriculture and farming. With these cells and tissues, not only the original plant varieties and animal breeds be re-generated in times of wildlife epidemics, climate changes or any such natural calamities resulting in reduction or extinction of these species but, also new varieties and breeds with improved genetic traits be generated thus, increasing a chromosomal diversity within species. Besides cells and tissues, gene banks also store plant seeds, sperms, eggs and embryos of numerous mammal species. Storing reproductive organs, such as ovaries and testes is also getting common with the advancement in science and technology.

With humans disturbing nature at such a fast pace, it would not be long when we will have only limited options for recreation activities in the lap of Mother Nature. If we do not start thinking about saving the wildlife now, there will soon be a time when we will not be taking our kids to zoos and biological parks to have them a glimpse at beautiful animals and birds but, would be showing them the pictures of these creatures only in books bearing the tagline of 'Extinct Species' in bold letters.

Wildlife also plays an important role in improving the economy of the country. Inviting tourists from all across the globe to witness endemic and rare species through their offerings for game safaris and birding tours; wildlife reserves and forests greatly contribute to inflow of foreign exchange thereby, increasing country's GDP. It is not only wildlife safaris or bird watching that contributes to the country's economy, many other activities such as trekking, fishing and river rafting require government permits and licences, the cost of which goes into government's account. That is not all; the cost of tourist's travel, local transportation, food, accommodation and sight-seeing – all indirectly contributes a significant amount to the nation's economy. With influx of tourists, seasonal job opportunities for localites also increases significantly that again adds as a contributing factor to improved GDP.

It is for this reason, many countries are today, promoting wildlife tourism even if they have to go to an extent of creating artificial habitats by importing flora and fauna from countries rich in these resources.

For many, wildlife is the source of income and provides them with their daily bread and butter. Consider the simple case of fishermen who greatly rely for their income on their daily catches or the farmers who heavily depend on a healthy crop yield for their livelihood. Similarly, many industries such as textile, paper, timber and rubber highly depend for their revenue on wildlife. Consider another common case of hotels and resorts sitting near wildlife parks. These will only earn if the park and its animals remain conserved and protected thereby, attracting tourists staying over in their resorts, which would in turn be contributing to their revenues. There are many other people employed in wildlife based ventures such as the ones supplying fishing gears, snorkelling and scuba-diving equipment, binoculars for bird-watching, porters, guides, drivers, mahouts (the list is endless), who are benefited by wildlife tourism. There is a great market across the world for exotic animal products such as leather bags, belts, fur jackets, ivory crafts and jewellery. People working in these trades also have a significant dependency on wildlife.

DISCUSSION

Wildlife also has an important role to play in different cultures. Many animal and plant species actually represent the cultural backbone of the community. Certain animals are even associated with particular gods and goddesses, and are often symbolic of a deity's power. For instance, cow is revered as mother in Hindus and therefore, holds a significant religious value. Similarly hawks and eagles are considered to be sacred in Native American culture. Because of such species' contribution to cultural heritage, special cultural preservation acts under animal protection laws have been formulated in many countries. If these cultural associations with wildlife would not have been formed by our fore-fore ancestors, some of these species that greatly contribute to human well-being on earth, would have got extinct centuries back.

Today, almost all the wildlife authorities across different countries are facing illicit acts of poaching and killing of animals by smugglers for animal skins, tusks and horns. What these people don't realize is that today, they might be earning big fortunes by indulging in these activities but, 10 or 20 years later there would be no animals left which once used to be their source of incomes.

When there are no animals, there would be no forests and no forests means soil erosion, warm weather, drying up of lakes and rivers, no rains and hence, no crops and vegetation. This all is a cascading effect which every human needs to realize now. And, it's not a one man's job to save wildlife; it's a joint effort that every single person needs to be part of.

The wildlife authorities should come forward with stringent plans of minimizing human interference in

the core forest areas and effective wildlife tourism policies should be implemented so that illegal activities can be effectively controlled. Plus, for us as individuals we should start working towards taking small steps from our homes; minimize the use of electronic equipment such as air-conditioners that contribute towards global warming, pool vehicles while commuting so that there is less pollution and less harm to the ozone layer and save water. Even if we start contributing our bits to the environment and nature, it would come back to us for our good in future.

Small animals particularly bees, insects, butterflies, and birds play an important role in food production. Conservation of these animals, therefore, aid in pollination. Since they depend on nectar from flowers, they are vital in crop production, inter-cropping, and promoting the continuity of native plant species. By moving from one flower to another in search of nectar, bees carry pollen by sustaining the process of crop growth.

Conserving wildlife means conserving heritage and traditional culture. Some places are known for their flora and fauna in relation to the native practices and ways of livelihood, which means that failing to conserve the environment, will lead to loss of their land and native heritage.

For example, big cats like lions, leopards, cheetahs and huge herbivores like elephants and giraffes are often associated with Africa Safaris that has lately been coined as “magical Africa.” Another example is the scenery of thousands of wild beasts’ migration which is associated with the “Serengeti Plain” ecosystem.

For example, if humans fail to conserve the wildlife and natural habitats, it would lead to the destruction of water supply sources causing droughts and dissertation. What is more, uncontrolled human activities like deforestation and logging are known to cause negative effects on the environment and thus, conserving wildlife means protecting ecological stability and balance.

CONCLUSION

Conserving fauna and flora encourages ecological stability and balance in the world. The plants, for example, play an important role in ensuring a healthy ecosystem by balancing carbon dioxide and oxygen in the environment. If animal species become dominant whether it is humans or wildlife, it will cause a lot of instability affecting the survival of all plant and animal species in the world.

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