

Threat to Wild life

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There are few places left on the planet where the impact of people has not been felt. Animals and habitats are at particular risk from land development leading to habitat destruction, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, Pollution; competition from non-native species and the effects of climate change has also contributed in a massive way to the destruction of the wild life. It is essential to nurture nature. Ignoring nature will lead to high inequity to the ecological balance. As per the media, the world environment day 2016 had been celebrated by focusing on the most important point of environmental issue. This study is focused on the theme of world environment day celebration "fight against the illegal trade in wildlife for life" (zero tolerance for the illegal trade in wildlife) focusing on save the life of wild animals like elephants, rhinos, gorillas, whales, sea turtles, orangutans, pangolins, rosewoods, helmeted hornbills, tigers including other species. It is essential to raise the voice against wildlife crime and damages caused by it and take actions to prevent it.

Keywords: wildlife; illegal trade; poaching; over exploitation; zero tolerance

INTRODUCTION

Dr Prakash Amte is the son of Baba Amte, the famed social worker and activist. One day Dr Prakash and his wife saw some people dragging tied monkeys to be killed or sold. The scene disturbed them so much that they offered to pay the villagers in kind, in return for the animals. And that was how Amte Animal Park, Hemalkasa, Maharashtra, came into existence. Mr and Mrs Amte have created a unique family of wild animals staying together. This is one story of saving the wild life and here is another extreme form of atrocities that the animal world as well as the world of plantation has to undergo. Wildlife is under threat from many different kinds of human activities, from directly destroying habitat to spreading invasive species and disease. Most ecosystems are facing multiple threats. Each new threat puts additional stress on already weakened ecosystems and their wildlife.

Each year, millions of plants and animals are caught and harvested from the wild and then sold as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist curios and medicine. While a great deal of this trade is legal, yet an enormous proportion of it is illegal. It has led to the death blow of many species and is threatening the survival of several endangered species.



Captive Baby Sumatran Orang Utan Pongo abelii)Pongo

Wildlife crime is the 4th largest illegal trade in the world. Wildlife crime is a big business. Run by dangerous international networks, wildlife and animal parts are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms. By its very nature, it is almost impossible

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to obtain reliable figures for the value of illegal wildlife trade. Experts at TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, estimate that it runs into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Some examples of illegal wildlife trade are well known, such as poaching of elephants for ivory and tigers for their skins and bones. However, countless other species are similarly overexploited, from marine turtles to timber trees. Not all wildlife trade is illegal. Wild plants and animals from tens of thousands of species are caught or harvested from the wild and then sold legitimately as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist ornaments and medicine. Wildlife trade escalates into a crisis when an increasing proportion is illegal and unsustainable—directly threatening the survival of many species in the wild.

At the global scale, illegal wildlife trade ranks as the fourth largest illegal industry after narcotics, human trafficking, and counterfeit products and is valued at approximately US \$19-26 billion per year. According to a recent report by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, at least 132,144 seizures of illegal transnational wildlife trade, involving thousands of species, were made across 120 countries in the past decade. Although not a major consumer in the global illegal wildlife market, 20% of all wildlife seizures recorded during 1996-2008 took place in India.

In India, the conditions have become grim. In 2005, the forest officials shockingly revealed that Rajasthan's Sariska Tiger Reserve, once among the best places has lost its entire big cat population. A similar story played out four years later. The same tigers had disappeared from the Panna Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh. In both these cases, it is evident that poaching by organized gangs had played a key role in exterminating the big cats. In subsequent years, seizures of large consignments containing tiger, leopard and otter skins in India, China and along their shared border has thrown a new light on the magnitude and international nature of illegal trade of these Indian species.

Which wildlife is being over exploited?

The hunting, trapping, collecting and fishing of wildlife at unsustainable levels is not something new. The passenger pigeon was hunted to extinction early in the last century, and overhunting nearly caused the extinction of the American bison and several species of whales.

Today, the Endangered Species Act, USA, protects some U.S. species that were in danger from overexploitation, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) works to prevent the global trade of wildlife. But there are many species that are not protected from being illegally traded or overharvested.

Fish and other aquatic species

As fishing gear and boats have improved, the fishing industry has become very efficient at harvesting fish and shellfish. The industrialization of the fishing industry and the increasing world demand for seafood have people taking more fish from oceans, lakes and rivers than is sustainable. Prized fish, such as swordfish, cod and tuna, have undergone dramatic declines. In the Great Lakes overfishing has caused whitefish, walleye, and sturgeon populations to decline. Beyond their role in the food supply, freshwater and marine fish are also trapped for the aquarium trade and fished for sport.

Birds

Birds are collected or hunted for sport, food and the cage-bird pet trade (parrots and songbirds are prized as pets). Millions of birds are traded internationally each year. Close to 30% of globally threatened birds are threatened by overexploitation, particularly parrots, pigeons and pheasants. The Carolina parakeet was once the only species of parrot in the U.S., but it was hunted to extinction early in the last century for food, to protect crops and for its feathers (which adorned ladies' hats).

Mammals

People have always hunted mammal species—for fur, food, sport, and for their horns or antlers. Mammals are also trapped for the pet trade, zoos and biomedical research. Today, illegal hunting still threatens many species, especially large mammals such as tigers, rhinoceros, bears and even primates, whose body parts are highly valued in some parts of the world for traditional medicine.

Amphibians

Amphibians are collected and shipped all over the world for the pet trade, medicine, education (frogs are dissected in many biology classes), scientific research and for food (frog legs are a delicacy in many parts of the world). The California red-legged frog, now a federally protected endangered species,

was over hunted for food and its numbers seriously depleted during the Gold Rush in the area around San Francisco.

Reptiles

Reptiles are harvested and traded around the world for their skins or shells, their eggs, meat, and for the pet trade. Overharvesting of the Kemp's ridley sea turtle's eggs nearly led to its extinction, and today it is still an endangered species. In the U.S., box turtles are being collected at unsustainable levels for the overseas pet trade. Some reptile skins—such as crocodile, python and monitor lizard—are highly prized as exotic leathers.

Invertebrates

Invertebrates make up at least 75% of all known animal species. Insects, oysters, octopus, crayfish, sea stars, scorpions, crabs and sponges are all kinds of invertebrates. Today, many invertebrates – particularly marine invertebrates—are at risk from over harvesting. Chesapeake Bay oysters, once an important part of the Bay economy, are now in decline. Horseshoe crabs, whose eggs provide food for migratory birds, fish and other organisms, are being harvested as bait for eel and whelk fishing. Octopus are suffering declines world-wide due to heavy fishing pressure. Shells and corals are collected for ornaments and jewelry.

Plants

Plants are vital to our survival and are the foundation of most of the Earth's ecosystems. People harvest plants for food, medicine, building materials, and as raw materials for making other products. But we are taking too many plants from the wild. Some plants, such as orchids, are so prized by collectors that they are now endangered and legally protected from poaching by international law. Some medicinal plants, such as American ginseng, have also been so enthusiastically collected that it is now very hard to find them in the wild. A number of tree species that are prized for their wood, such as mahogany, are under threat because of overharvesting.

Measures taken to protect Wild life

Disappearance of iconic species such as elephants, tigers or sea-turtles would be a disaster for conservation efforts. Even loss of any species at a local level, is an erosion of the bio-diversity that underpins the natural systems upon which we all depend for our food security, medicines, fresh air,

water, shelter and a clean and healthy environment.

There has been a growing momentum to check illegal trade in wild life at a global level. This year, the UN has given World Wildlife Day the theme "Listen to the Young Voices". Given that almost one quarter of the world's population is aged between 10 and 24, vigorous efforts need to be made to encourage young people, as the future leaders and decision makers of the world, to act at both local and global levels to protect endangered wildlife. To respond to the growing crisis and international call for action, in 2015 the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank launched the Global Wildlife Program (GWP). The GWP is a \$131 million program that deploys resources along the entire illegal wildlife trade supply chain in 19 countries in Africa and Asia. It aims to reduce poaching through the engagement of local communities and by conserving and protecting wildlife natural habitats; control wildlife crime and reducing trafficking through effective law enforcement; and reduce demand for illegal wildlife by raising awareness and changing behavior.

In 2016, UN Environment launched the Wild for Life Campaign, urging politicians, celebrities and business leaders to help bring global attention to the fight against illegal wildlife trade. The campaign asks participants to find their kindred species and use their own spheres of influence to end illegal trade, in support of two Sustainable Development Goals: SDG14, calling for an end to illegal and unreported fishing, and destructive fishing practices, and SDG15 calling for the sustainable management of land, forests and ecosystems to halt biodiversity loss among other environmental threats.

At national level, many efforts are being made by the current government to control illegal trade in wild life. Odisha Chief minister, Naveen Patnaik addressed the government enforcement agencies and general public to adopt zero-tolerance towards illegal trade in wildlife. "Due to joint efforts of the wildlife wing and the CID, Crime Branch, illegal trade has been checked to a great extent. Public awareness campaigns, involving local communities and voluntary organizations are being organized for protection and conservation of wildlife and to check their illegal trade," said Mr Patnaik while addressing the State-level celebration of the World Environment Day (TOI, June 21, 2017). He said that the government is taking all possible steps to protect and preserve wild life through wild life crime

control cell, which is functioning at Bhubaneswar with an objective to take pro-active measures to prevent illegal trade in wild flora and fauna. Over 400 activists were presented Prakruti Mitra and Prakruti Bandhu Awards for contribution to environment protection and preservation.

CONCLUSION

Much work needs to be done. Wildlife products are sold in open violation of national or local laws – and concerted investigations and law enforcement is needed to police any continuing availability. Little or no information is available to alert buyers to the illegal nature of some purchasing options, or

regarding the effect the market for these products has on wild populations. Greater awareness of the legality of wildlife souvenir trade is needed to enable travelers to buy wisely.

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