

SAVE WILD PLACES

Wild Animals Need Wild Areas



Wilderness or wildlands are natural places on our planet that have not been significantly modified by humans. These last, truly wild places that have not been developed with industry, roads, buildings and houses are critical for the survival of many plant and animal species. They also provide humans with educational and recreational opportunities, and are deeply valued for aesthetic, cultural, moral and spiritual reasons.

Some wildlands are protected, preserving natural areas for humans, animals, flora and fauna. Others are disappearing at alarming rates, and simply drawing lines around specific areas is not enough. All of our planet is intricately connected. What happens outside a specific wilderness area affects what happens inside it.

Many wildlife habitats have become fragmented due to human development. Without the protection of vast expanses of wildlands to meet the minimum requirements of the largest, most widely roaming members of the ecosystem, they may dwindle or vanish forever. The loss of any species effects the entire ecosystem.

Biomes, or ecosystems, are large regions of the planet with shared characteristics such as climate, soils, plants and animals. Climate is an important factor that shapes the nature of an ecosystem, as well as precipitation, humidity, elevation, topography and latitude. The five major biomes include aquatic, desert, forest, grassland and tundra biomes.

AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS: The aquatic biome includes habitats around the world dominated by water.

FORESTS: Forest biomes are dominated by trees and extend over one-third of the earth's land surface.

DESERTS: Desert biomes receive very little rain and cover about one-fifth of the planet's surface.

TUNDRA: Tundra is a cold habitat with long winters, low temperatures, permafrost soils, short vegetation, brief growing seasons and little drainage.

GRASSLANDS: Grasslands are dominated by grasses with few large shrubs or trees.

MOUNTAINS: Mountain ranges are located all around the globe. They are the result of plate movements below the planet's crust. The two main types of mountain ranges are temperate and tropical mountains.

URBAN AREAS: Once wild landscapes have been transformed into urban centers, changing animal habitats both inside and outside the areas. Animals in these areas have had to adapt.

Each biome also includes numerous types of sub-habitats. By protecting and preserving ecosystems, we protect and preserve plant and animal species... including our own species.



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

LAND: The world population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. As our population increases, there is even more pressure on forests, grasslands, deserts and other natural areas to provide food, housing and energy for humans. These demands increase the stress of already fragmented natural areas suffering from pollution, deforestation, disrupted migratory routes and changing environmental conditions. Forests are being cleared at alarming rates, an estimated 18 million acres each year. At the same time, poor agriculture practices lead to millions of acres of land lost annually through soil erosion and land degradation. Trillions of tons of garbage is produced every year, while more and more goods are produced...resulting in the creation of more waste. Most garbage is buried underground in landfill sites, causing environmental and health concerns.

AIR: Air pollution is a mixture of solid particles and gases in the air. Car emissions, chemicals from factories, dust, pollen and mold spores may be suspended as particles. Ozone, a gas, is a major part of air pollution in cities. When ozone forms air pollution, it's also called smog. Air pollution is caused by polluters who refuse to clean up toxic air emissions, despite proven pollution control technologies. Most air toxics originate from human-made sources, including automobiles, factories, refineries and power plants. Indoor sources include building materials and cleaning solvents. As the environment suffers, humans suffer from asthma, lung disease, heart ailments, cancer and shortened lives. Acid rain, often caused by pollutants in the atmosphere, falls from the sky in the form of rain, snow, fog or dry material. Devastating effects to forests,

aquatic systems, buildings and human health can result. Air toxics then contaminate our food products, drinking water and soil.

WATER: Pollution, habitat fragmentation and destruction, and overfishing are having devastating effects on our oceans, rivers and lakes. Acidification, caused by increased carbon emis-



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sions, degrade coral reefs and corrode the shells of sea creatures. Freshwater ecosystems provide us with drinking water, food, energy and recreation. These ecosystems are also critical to plants and animals. Increased demands for food, energy and material goods have placed unprecedented pressure on these fragile environments. Within the next 20 years, half of the world's population may face water shortages. Oceans are a critical part of the earth's support system. Acid rain pollutes our seas. Oceans are degraded by spills and chemical run-offs. The largest living structures on earth, coral reefs, are among the greatest storehouses of biodiversity on the planet. Up to 70 percent of coral reefs are expected to be lost by 2050 due to human activities. Water is under threat from fertilizers and chemical runoff, dumped chemical and industrial wastes, untreated sewage and medicinal residues.

GENETIC ENGINEERING: Manipulating plant DNA to produce super crops is a dangerous global experiment. When released into the environment, they cannot be recalled. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) can spread through nature and interbreed with natural organisms. They can contaminate natural environments in an unforeseeable and uncontrollable way. This is referred to as 'genetic pollution', a new major threat to the environment, animals and humans.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

SUPPORT PRESERVATION: Support conservation and preservation efforts - locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Donate to preservation organizations.

VOLUNTEER: Volunteer at a nature preserve, park or wildlife sanctuary or start a group dedicated to protecting the environment in your area.

ADOPT RESPONSIBILITY: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle as much as possible. Purchase only environmentally responsible products. Buy organic and non-GMO food. Never litter. Clean up litter and report illegal garbage dumps and pollution.

EDUCATE OTHERS: Distribute flyers and fact sheets to everyone you know; everywhere you go. Send letters to legislators, companies and businesses. Write letters and articles about endangered places to local newspapers. Call radio programs to discuss your concerns.

BOYCOTT: Boycott businesses that are environmentally irresponsible.