

Human Impact on Natural Habitats

Homo Sapiens Sapiens, modern man, has been the largest non-natural environmental destruction force the planet has ever seen. We have taken animals from their natural habitats and put them in cages for our own enjoyment. We rule with the hand of God deciding which species are “worth” saving; then we decide that someone else is responsible for maintaining these ecosystems. The only time the environment comes first is when it affects the economy. And to top it all off ethics have to be brought into the equation with conservation. Things change, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad, as the most cognitive being that we know of, it is our duty to decide what to do with the environment.

The first issue is zoos. Are they a thing of the past? Do humans need to see what a tiger looks like? The answer is no, not when half the nine year olds have smartphones. Traditional zoos no longer serve a purpose. But then what do we do with the zoos? They can still play a role, not a role of entertainment, but of conservation. We can let the animals learn of their natural habits by means of soft release, and provide safe breeding grounds for endangered and threatened species. This would allow them to be able to survive in the wild and be able to breed safely then be reintroduced into the wild.

There are many people that decide which species and ecosystems are worth saving. Among them are the IUCN, the FAO, and the WRI. These are international organizations and committee’s that have the tentative job of weighing the needs of humans with the needs of billions of natural species, some of which are endangered and threatened. Extracting natural resources such as oil drilling, the lumber industry, and mining are the main threat to the environment, many countries rely on these businesses as their primary economic contribution. So it is up to those with economies that are dynamic enough to function while not completely extracting these natural resources from the earth. In order for these people to make these hard decisions they have to have good, up to date information coming from people that know what they are talking about, these people are known as environmental scientists.

So international organizations and committee’s make the hard decisions based on the information gathered and given by the environmental scientists, but whose responsibility is it? Well in a ways it is every single human on earth’s responsibility to do everything that they can to help save the environment, because it does a lot more for us than we realize. But not everyone can do much to help

the environment, so then it comes to the policy makers, heads of governments, CEO's of multi-billion dollar corporations to do the right thing, not the cheap thing. However this is not often the case, especially in the case of corporations, because they are all about profit and will only give back a little to look good for the cameras.

Some people say that the environment has a precise value that can be measured. It is measured by which natural resources it has. For example a forest with an expensive, decorative wood with iron ore nearby is worth more than a desert because it has few resources other than sand. When environments are destroyed for development there is sometimes a mitigation process that has to occur, however there can be credits that can be bought from already existing wetlands to fund restoration projects. This is sad because this allows for development to continue at a faster rate than the ecosystems can be restored.

There are many ethical issues to consider in the conservation of an endangered or threatened animal. Some of these ethical arguments include, separation from family, the environment in which they live, and weather they should be released back into the wild or not. Some animals are meant to be separated after a time, but some animals, like orcas, and some great apes, are meant to be together as a family, or even an extended family, for life. Where should the animal live, in a cage being lavishly treated, in a zoo enclosure, with risk of zoonosis, or in an expensive conservatory enclosure to stimulate a natural habitat? What it comes down to is money; if there is enough money then it is more likely to have a nice place to live, but sometimes not even money can give the animals a good place to live. Weather they should be released back into the wild really depends on the animal and its situation. If it can be successfully thought the basics of surviving back in its natural habitat and that habitat is not in grave danger from human effects and can be relatively safe from poaching from humans then the animal can be reintroduced. Sadly this is not often the case so reintroducing species can be very difficult to do. The ethics of what is best for animals is often superseded by the needs or wants of humans.