

Animals in Crisis...

Are People to Blame?

Imagine if your house was falling apart and you had no place to live. What if the temperature was becoming so warm that you couldn't survive in the heat? What if you couldn't find enough food to eat? Many animals all around the globe face these challenges. Humans are partly responsible for the **plight**, or terrible situation, of many animals. If we don't take steps now to save animals that are **endangered** or at risk of dying off,



many of these animals will become **extinct**, which means there will be none left at all!

Overhunting

Many land and ocean animals are endangered because people have hunted or fished for so many of them. Humans have developed more effective weapons and more efficient trapping systems over the years, so it's become much easier and quicker to catch and kill animals.

Some animals have been overhunted because their parts, such as skins and tusks and body oils, can be sold for large amounts of money. For example, whales have been overhunted for their meat, fat, and oil. Until restrictions, or limits, were placed on killing whales, many different species became endangered, and some still are. Similarly, elephants have been hunted for their ivory tusks, which are considered very valuable. Sometimes people overhunt animals for sport and bring home the fur pelts or animal heads as trophies.

Destroying Habitats

Humans are sometimes responsible for destroying the places where animals live. When people chop down forests to sell



the wood from the trees, to create roads, or to create more room for farming, many animals lose their homes. Forests provide food, shelter, and protection for all kinds of animals, from tiny insects to huge gorillas. Because of **deforestation**, or the cutting down of trees, many animals, including monkeys, birds, and frogs, are now endangered.

Habitats are also being destroyed because of **global warming**, an increase in the temperature. Many scientists believe that global warming is occurring partly because of pollution caused by human beings. The climates in places like the Arctic and Antarctica are becoming warmer, and animals such as polar bears and penguins are seeing their icy homes start to melt. As the ice melts, these animals have fewer places to make their homes and hunt for food.

Animals that live in the ocean are also becoming endangered because human beings have **contaminated**, or polluted, the waters and shorelines with toxic substances. These harmful substances, such as chemicals, pesticides, and oil, are responsible for the death of

many animals. Also, some animals are becoming endangered because many accidentally get caught in fishing nets or collide with boats in the water.

Why We Should Care!

Saving animals from extinction isn't just good for animals; it's good for humans, too! When a whole species of animals dies off, the natural world is affected. If the natural world is out of balance because animals are becoming endangered or extinct, the quality of our forests and rivers declines as well, making it more difficult to grow food or live on the land.



What We Can Do

The first step toward preventing these problems is to learn as much as possible about the plight of animals around the world. That way, we can understand what we can do to help endangered animals and change the actions we take every day that affect the lives of animals in faraway places.