

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



Protect Our Species

International
Mother Earth Day
Edition

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"Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence." We have no such right." (LS #33)

Pope Francis

Nature's gifts to our planet are the millions of species that we know and love, and many more that remain to be discovered. Unfortunately, human beings have irrevocably upset the balance of nature and, as a result, the world is facing the greatest rate of extinction since we lost the dinosaurs more than 60 million years ago. But unlike the fate of the dinosaurs, the rapid extinction of species in our world today is the result of human activity.

As Pope Francis reminds us, all living things have an intrinsic value, and each plays a unique role in the complex web of life. This month, as we celebrate International Mother Earth Day, this issue of JPIC News emphasizes the need we have to protect all species and especially those that are most vulnerable to becoming extinct.

April
JPIC Days of Remembrance

April 7
World Health Day

April 22
Mother Earth Day



April 24 – 30
World Immunization Week

April 25
World Malaria Day



Global Species Decline

The world is facing a mass extinction of species. All species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods (insects and arachnids), fish, crustaceans, corals and other cnidarians, and plants have declined, in many cases, severely. Human civilization has had a negative impact on most living things.

- We are amidst the largest period of species extinction in the last 60 million years. Scientists estimate that we are now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal rate, with multiple extinctions daily.
- Close to 60% of the world's 504 primate species are threatened with extinction, and 75% of our primate species are in severe population decline.
- Worldwide, more than 650,000 marine mammals are caught or seriously injured by fishing gear annually.
- 40% of the world's bird species are in decline, and 1 in 8 is threatened with global extinction.
- A new study has suggested that insect populations have decreased by more than 75% in Germany over the last 28 years. This is very alarming: 80% of wild plants rely on bees and other insects for pollination, and 60% of bird species rely on insects for food.
- Lizard populations are especially vulnerable to climate change. A recent study projects that if the current decline in lizard populations continues, 40% of all lizard species will be extinct by 2080.

Source: Earth Day Network





“We have lost one half of the animal population in the world in the past 40 years and knowing this is driven by human consumption... we must act now.”

World Wildlife Fund



In March 2018, Sudan, the last remaining male northern white rhino, died at the age of 45. With Sudan's passing, the total number remaining northern white rhinos dropped to just two — both of which are female and incapable of natural reproduction. The rhino's population decline was caused by extensive poaching for their horns.

In 2018, scientists announced that three bird species vanished from the Earth for good. The list's most vibrant bird, Spix's Macaw, is a blue parrot native to Brazil that is believed to have gone extinct in the wild. The creation of a dam, trapping for trade & deforestation drove the decline in the Spix's Macaw wild population but an estimated 60 to 80 still live in captivity.

OUR LIVING PLANET, AT A GLANCE

60%

Populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians have, on average, declined by 60% between 1970 and 2014, the most recent year with available data.

50%

The Earth is estimated to have lost about half of its shallow water corals in the past 30 years.

20%

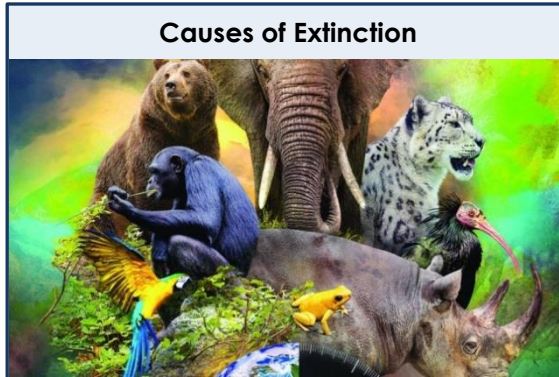
A fifth of the Amazon has disappeared in just 50 years.

\$125 trillion

Globally, nature provides services worth around \$125 trillion a year, while also helping ensure the supply of fresh air, clean water, food, energy, medicines, and much more.

“We have the science, technology & money to protect the environment while supporting the nearly 10 billion people expected to call Earth home by 2050.”

U.N. Global Environment Outlook
March, 2019



Causes of Extinction

Overexploitation of species: We have overfished our waters and hunted many species of animals to extinction. It is unlikely that humans will ever stop consuming other animals completely, but it is entirely possible for us to consume them in a sustainable way.

Illegal wildlife trade: Illegal hunting, known as poaching, and illegal trade of wildlife products is a major direct threat to the future of many of the world's most threatened species. Elephants, rhinos, pangolins, tigers, turtles, birds and hundreds of other animal species face harm and potential extinction because of illegal poaching.

Habitat Destruction: A bulldozer pushing down trees is the iconic image of habitat destruction. Other ways people directly destroy habitat: filling in wetlands, dredging rivers, mowing fields, and cutting down trees.

Habitat fragmentation: Much of the remaining terrestrial wildlife habitat has been cut up into fragments by roads and development. Aquatic species' habitats have been split up by dams and water diversions. These remaining fragments may be too small to support species that need larger territories to find mates and food.

Habitat degradation: Habitats can become so degraded they can no longer support native wildlife, as a result of pollution, invasive species and disruption of ecosystem processes, such as the changing intensity of fires in an ecosystem. Pesticide use has also been recognized as another major cause of habitat degradation.

Climate Change: As climate change alters the Earth's temperature and weather patterns, it also impacts plant and animal life. Scientists expect that the number, range, and variety of species will decline greatly as global temperatures continue to rise.

Source: Earth Day Network



For Your Reflection and Action

Consider your lifestyle choices and what impact they have on God's creatures: what you buy, what you eat, where you vacation.

Discern areas where you can improve your relationship with creatures of other species.

Learn about the good work done by the World Wildlife Fund and join them in their advocacy efforts.

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/> (English)

<https://www.wwf.fr/> (French)

<https://www.wwf.es/> (Spanish)

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