

### *Apathy Personified*

Humans claim to have so much love for animals that time is spent going to the zoos to be educated about and to look at them. Documentaries about endangered species are watched and animals are domesticated and kept as pets in homes. However, are people really protecting the animals they claim to love?

Earth's average temperature has risen by 1.5°F over the past century due to climate change. The warmer oceans and changes in temperature have had a drastic effect on underwater biodiversity. Polar ice caps are fizzling away and contributing to the rise of water levels. Marine animals that live in shallow waters now live in deeper waters and most do not survive. Coral, a source of food and shelter for many marine life are lost. Change in pH of the water can also be fatal as different species have contrasting tolerance levels. Even so, the formation of smog and acid rain can drastically reduce the probability of marine life survival. Trinity College School's environmental science teacher, Steph Feddery, summed up the negative effect that sealife is facing by saying "The increase of carbon dioxide contributes to climate change, which negatively impacts global warming - all linked. We are losing tons of habitats, various ecosystems and animals that live in them."

The root cause of this is actually humans. Countries that reclaim land, speed up the extinction process of life underwater. Land reclamation makes the water more acidic which results in organisms not being able to adapt. Sediments used do not allow sunlight to pass through causing destruction to the plant's photosynthesis process. Sea otters in Malaysia are severely impacted when it comes to land reclamation. They are losing their habitat and resting places. With the change in the acidity of the water, their food - sea urchins, lobsters and crabs, can no longer be found in addition to them being fished out by



Sea otter uses plastic bag as blanket in place of kelp.

humans. Sea otters are also in danger of approaching bridges and roads where they could end up hurt or killed. Without a source of food and with limited space, they are most likely to go extinct soon. Humans are taking up the ocean to fulfill their need of expanding their lands and are letting several sea creatures face the brunt of it.

In addition, Canada's most majestic and splendid marine mammal, the polar bear, sadly, is also facing endangerment. As increased levels of carbon dioxide and methane have warmed the Earth, polar ice caps are melting. This has resulted in ice caps shrinking 40% in the last 40 years, thereby depriving the polar bears of their natural habitats and sources of food, primarily seals. The despair of these animals was best told by Justin Murphy, one of Trinity College School's environmental enthusiasts, "This is one of the saddest examples of a positive feedback loop. As ice is a lighter color and very reflective, the sun's rays usually bounce back to space which limits warming. But as climate change continues, there is less ice and more water below. This results in the sun's energy being absorbed, which leads to more warming, which leads to more ice melting." Due to human's increased rates of the usage of fossil fuels as well as livestock management, these white, fluffy, muscular mammals will soon turn into dusty, weak, boney creatures.



Polar bear struggling to survive as there is not much ice.

As increased levels of carbon dioxide and methane have warmed the Earth, polar ice caps are melting. This has resulted in ice caps shrinking 40% in the last 40 years, thereby depriving the polar bears of their natural habitats and sources of food, primarily seals. The despair of these animals was best told by Justin Murphy, one of Trinity College School's environmental enthusiasts, "This is one of the saddest examples of a positive feedback loop. As ice is a lighter color and very reflective, the sun's rays usually bounce back to space which limits warming. But as climate change continues, there is less ice and more water below. This results in the sun's energy being absorbed, which leads to more warming, which leads to more ice melting." Due to human's increased rates of the usage of fossil fuels as well as livestock management, these white, fluffy, muscular mammals will soon turn into dusty, weak, boney creatures.

Furthermore, our planet thrives on food chains. If one species starts to deplete and disappear, everything down the chain will be affected. Take salmon for example. As of today, less than 1% of salmon return to rivers to spawn. This is due to humans harvesting them, taking up their habitat, genetically modifying them and building of hydro dams. The stock decline of salmon has



Devastated grizzly bear roams around on the lookout for salmon or any food.

affected land animals such as grizzly bears and eagles. Without their source of protein and fat, grizzly bears are weaker as they enter hibernation and even weaker when spring rolls around. The same goes for eagles as fish is the primary food for them. Without one animal in its proper place, food chains can go haywire and other animals could end up endangered.

It is clear that aquatic animals are facing endangerment due to human activities as well as the selfish needs of humans. Even though there are several organizations such as WWF, The Ocean Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy and many more that have taken a step forward to protect marine life, it is certainly not enough. Going to the zoo to learn about animals, watching documentaries and nurturing them as pets is not enough. Environmental engineer in training, Amanda Pinto, stated that in order to protect our marine life, “we should stop polluting the oceans, beaches and natural areas where animals live. In addition, we should make safe and sustainable seafood choices and reduce our carbon footprint which can help decrease the amount of harmful gases that are released into the atmosphere.”

It is easy to care for and protect the sea creatures. Help declutter shores - plastic especially, kills more than half of the world's turtle population when ingested. Choose seafood that is sustainable by reducing the demand for overexploited species. In addition, more than 73 million sharks die each year for their fins - don't purchase items that take away their lives. Alternatives to reclaim land such as floating triangles should be used. Reduce, reuse, recycle as small actions go a long way.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put humans worldwide on lockdown but animals have returned to their rightful environments. Venice's waters are bustling with fish, Brazil has baby turtles hatching on its Northeastern coast, and India has dolphins. The Earth has shown signs of wonders happening with the absence of human pollution.

If this love for animals is real, it is time to show it. In reality, nothing close to enough is being done to protect life below water. It is taken lightly that animals will not go extinct no matter what humans do. There is no concern for the environment. People are still polluting, reclaiming land, and destroying ecosystems. It truly is apathy personified.

### **Citations (Pictures):**

Croft, D. (n.d.). *Otter Be Ashamed – Otter Uses Plastic As Blanket Instead Of Kelp*  
[Photograph].

Hicker, R. (2019, October 23). *Emaciated grizzly bears in Canada spark greater concerns over depleted salmon population*. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/03/americas/emaciated-grizzly-bears-knights-inlet-canada-trnd-scn/index.html> (Originally photographed 2019, September 24)

*Struggling polar bears put on endangered list*. (2008, May 15). In Metrowebukmetro (Author). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://metro.co.uk/2008/05/15/struggling-polar-bears-put-on-endangered-list-137306/>

### **Citations (Information):**

10 Things You Can Do to Save the Ocean. (2019, May 29). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/oceans/take-action/10-things-you-can-do-to-save-the-ocean/>

Bear's Food and Diet. (2018, November 22). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<http://www.bearsmart.com/about-bears/food-diet/>

Dip 'n Dive. (2018, March 14). 10 Amazing Organizations Fighting to Save Our Oceans. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<https://dipndive.com/blog/10-amazing-organizations-fighting-to-save-our-oceans/>

Eagle Diet & Feeding. (n.d.). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<https://www.nationaleaglecenter.org/eagle-diet-feeding/>

Forget reclamation - can floating islands solve land shortage? (2018, July 20). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2102321/reclamation-alternative-dutch-researchers-say-floating-islands>

Getty), ((2019, March 19). Sharks' fins are cut while still alive in sick trade that could wipe species out. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from  
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/sharks-fins-cut-still-alive-14159841>

Greentumble. (2019, September 02). Salmon's Journey Through the Food Web. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://greentumble.com/feed-the-tree-salmons-journey-through-the-food-web/>

How Do We Know the Climate Is Changing? (2020, June 18). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/climate-change-evidence/>

International Seminar on Nuclear War and Planetary Emergencies. (n.d.). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://books.google.com.sa/books?id=sIVhDQAAQBAJ>

Mohamed, A. F. (2017, April 25). Consider habitats of marine animals in reclamation projects. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from [https://www.foe-malaysia.org/consider\\_habitats\\_of\\_marine\\_animals\\_in\\_reclamation\\_projects](https://www.foe-malaysia.org/consider_habitats_of_marine_animals_in_reclamation_projects)

Provider, C. (2014, December 10). Depleting Salmon Population – Causes & Recovery Process. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://worldwideaquaculture.com/depleting-salmon-population-causes-recovery-process/>

Salmon in the Food Web. (n.d.). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.scienceworld.ca/resource/salmon-food-web/>

Why Plastic Is a Problem for Marine Life. (2018, July 30). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://mission.cmaquarium.org/news/plastic-problem-inside-sea-turtles/>