

CAUSES OF WILD LIFE EXTINCTION

Wild life is an essential part of our ecosystem and its activities are important for keeping with vegetation in good health.

The most serious aspect of the loss of biodiversity is the extinction of species. With the environmental degradation, there had been a sudden decline in the number of wild life.

Human activity is the major threat to biodiversity and following are the chief causes of extinction of species caused by man —

① Habitat alteration —

② Habitat destruction —

The habitat destruction of wild life or biodiversity results from the expansion of human population and human activities. More than 50% of the wild life habitat has been destroyed in 49 out of 61 ~~out of~~ old world tropical countries.

In tropical Asia, 65% of the wild life habitat has been lost. The factors causing habitat destruction are the large industrial and commercial activities, such as mining, cattle ranching, agriculture, manufacturing, dam construction and even road construction through the forest. Rain forest, tropical dry forest, wetland, mangroves and grassland are threatened habitat and leading to desertification.

(b) Habitat fragmentation:- Habitat fragmentation is the process where a large continuous area is divided into two or many small fragments separated from each other by a highly modified or degraded landscape. Habitat fragmentation limit the potential of species for dispersal and colonisation. It also reduces the foraging ability of animals. Habitat fragmentation causes such edge effects as microclimatic changes in light, temperature, wind etc.

(c) Habitat degradation by pollution:-

The most subtle form of habitat degradation is environmental pollution by the irrational use of pesticides, industrial chemical and wastes, emissions from factories and automobiles. Habitat degradation generally affects the smaller communities.

2 Introduction of exotic species:- Introduction of exotic or foreign species may kill or eat native species to the end of extinction or may alter the habitat that many natives are no longer able to persist. The effect of exotic species is maximum on islands. Disease causing micro-organisms, if introduced to new virgin areas may cause epidemics and native species are eliminated completely.

3. Overexploitation :- Increasing human population has overexploited the existing natural resources. Overexploitation of resources also occurs when a commercial market develops for a previously unexploited or locally used species. The best example is trade in furs. Overexploitation threatens about one third of the endangered vertebrates in the world. Growing rural poverty, increasingly efficient methods of harvesting and the globalisation of the economy combine to exploit species to the point of extinction.

4. Hunting :- In poor or developing country hunting offers quick and easy money. The prices of animal products are always spiralling. For example, Tiger skin, tusk of elephants and the skin of other animals are very costly. This has led to the unlimited slaughter of these animals. The meat of many animals like deer, wild boar, and Nilgai has always been in great demand and promotes hunting.

Many people of affluent society go ~~for~~ to hunting for pleasure also. Predation and inter-species competition also cause extinction of wild life.

5. Coextinction :- Coextinction refers to the loss of a species due to extinction of another, for example the extinction of parasitic insects following the loss of their hosts. Species co-extinction is a manifestation of one of the interconnectedness of organisms.

In complex ecosystems, models suggest that coextinction is the most common form of biodiversity loss.

6 Genetic pollution - Genetic pollution refers to uncontrolled hybridization, introgression etc. can lead to extinction. Endemic population can face such extinction when new populations are imported or selectively bred by people. Interbreeding can swamp the rare gene pool and create hybrid, diminishing the purebred gene pool.

7 Climate change - Extinction by climate change has been confirmed by fossils study. A 2003 review across 14 biodiversity research centers predicted that there will be extinction of 15-37% of land species by 2050. Climate change has also been found to be factor in habitat loss and desertification.

8 Legal lapses - The protection of wild life is a state subject and many state governments are unable to protect the wild life by suitable law. The ignorance of the common man regarding the value of our wild life and their inaction towards their conservation also happen in depletion of wild life. In the word of the Pandit Nehru In spite of our culture and civilization man continues to be wild but more dangerous than any of the so called wild animals. People should improve their attitudes towards conservation of Environment and wild life together.