

**Course- WL- 707 Terrestrial Wildlife**  
**Management**  
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**Management**

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Lecture**

### **Status and Threats to Wildlife**

#### **Threats to wildlife Biodiversity.**

More specific threats to biodiversity are posed by deforestation (estimated at 1% annually), overgrazing, soil erosion, rampant hunting and fishing, and agricultural practices. As a result, it is estimated that at least 12% of the flora is threatened and several of the faunal species are threatened too. However, the real status of most species remains unknown. Some of the major threats posed by human activities are discussed below:

#### **1. PopulationGrowth**

The principal threat to biodiversity comes from the increased pressure on natural resources produced by high population growth and demands for increased standards of living. The process of economic development itself widens inequality and may force the poor to depend heavily on natural resources, while the development models followed, in most instances, have been incompatible with the sustainable use of natural resources.

#### **2. IrrigatedAgriculture**

It is another major threat to both the riverine and mangrove forests of Pakistan, which are fast disappearing. Riverine forests were rich in a wide variety of plants such as obhan, and animals like hog, deer, jungle cat, fishing cat, and gray and black partridges. Mangrove forests are particularly important habitats for certain fish species as noted earlier. Both have been

identified as endangered ecosystems, and if they disappear they take with them a unique association of species. Marginal changes in water releases at certain times are critical to the preservation of riverine habitats, it might be possible to accommodate them, but if they require water diversions at times when irrigation demands are high and water supplies are short, the chances of being able to maintain them are low.

### **3. Hunting**

Hunting has deep roots in Pakistani culture. It was the recreation of the Moghul emperors and is still extremely popular today. Wild animals have been hunted to extinction from hunting pressure. Various lizards and snakes are hunted for their skins, as are crocodiles and the larger mammals. Disturbing the natural order has other more subtle consequences. The increase in the numbers of wild boars, jackals, and porcupines, for example, is directly attributable to the elimination of their predators, particularly the large cats.

#### **Example**

A greater number of wild boars has led to the trampling and uprooting of groves and a reduction in the numbers of snakes, which in turn has led to an increase in the number of rats, responsible for post-harvest losses of grain. The loss of birds of prey has led to an increase in undesirable bird species. And having more birds can destroy undergrowth, through their droppings, or even the roost tree itself, which in turn can lessen the ability to resist water erosion, an ever-present threat in Pakistan.

### **4. Deforestation**

A greater threat to wildlife than hunting, however, is probably the disappearance of habitat or the competition with domestic grazing animals. The closed canopy forest in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan is reported to be shrinking at approximately 1% per year. Pressure stems from commercial logging (though this is not extensive), and the cleared areas. More significant is the relentless, incremental incursions into the forest by subsistence farmers; the killing of trees through lopping, burning, and tapping; the development of small agricultural plots among the trees; and excessive grazing by domestic animals.

### **5. Habitat Loss**

Conversion of forest to agriculture land and for development purposes, and the exploitation of forests for timber, fodder and fuel wood are some of the main threats to biodiversity in this region. Other threats include wood-charcoal production and intensive grazing. Many rural people depend on cattle for their livelihoods but do not have sufficient land holdings. It is not uncommon to see cows, water buffalo and goats grazing in forests, which can cause significant damage to natural ecosystems.

## **6. Species Loss**

Poaching is a major threat to wildlife in the region, especially endangered species like tigers, elephants and rhinos, which have a high commercial value on the black market. Killing wildlife also takes place as a result of human-wildlife conflict. Retaliation against tigers and snow leopards for killing livestock, and against elephants and rhinoceros for raiding crops, is prevalent and continues to intensify as humans and wildlife compete for land and other resources.

The most significant of which are climate change, habitat loss, species loss, and infrastructure (development). As a consequence less than 25% of the Eastern Himalayas' natural habitat remains intact, with some 163 native species considered globally threatened.

## **7. Climate Change**

It is widely accepted that climate change is the main factor behind the accelerated glacier retreat observed in the Himalayas. The Eastern Himalayas have the largest concentration of glaciers outside the polar region, and hold vast stores of fresh water. Continued climate change is predicted to lead to major changes in freshwater flows, with dramatic impacts on biodiversity, people and their livelihoods.