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A World Without Predators

A world where no wolves howled in the woods and winter tundra, no lions roared in the savannah, no jaguars climbed trees in their jungle home, and no bears huffed in the woods or winter landscapes would be a silent, sorrowful world. To think if one could only see these animals through pictures, knowing they no longer exist and will never come back is unimaginable. A world like this could only bring grievance and silence to the most luscious and most beautiful places on Earth, and only people could create or stop this world from happening. Hunting predators must be made illegal worldwide. The termination of predators will harm the ecosystem in many ways. It will also affect humans dramatically. Another problem is predators recently taken off of the endangered species list are almost immediately legal to hunt once more. Hunters and farmers will say predators bring harm to people and their livestock; however more harm will be made by killing them into extinction. People must try to understand and coexist with predatory animals peacefully. The solutions to these problems are simple: humans (particularly farmers) must realize there is a better solution to the conflicts with predators than killing the animals.  People also must live up to the name of smartest animal on the planet by not expanding continuously across the globe. Predatory hunting must not be made acceptable in modern day society.

The ecosystem will suffer in many ways with the termination of predators. This natural ecosystem has a food chain which includes five trophic levels; Primary producers such as plants or bacteria take the energy from the sun (photosynthesis) or chemicals (chemosynthesis) and get their nutrients from it. The primary consumers then eat the plants or bacteria, the secondary consumers then eat the primary consumer, the tertiary consumers then eat the secondary and primary consumers, and the quaternary consumers eat the primary, secondary, and tertiary consumers (the secondary, tertiary, and quaternary consumers may be omnivores or carnivores, and are what humans call “predators”). These food chains are unique to the specific biome, and end in a top predator (Fancher 1). If this food chain were disrupted, that is to say one trophic level of this food chain was annihilated completely, the rest would either die off, or reproduce so much, an inevitable food shortage would occur, causing a population collapse (Trafton 1). One example of this was the ecosystem collapse of Yellowstone National Park after the extermination of the gray wolf in the 1920’s. With their primary predators gone, the elk population exploded, leaving little to no food for other animals and no supplies for beavers to build dams. Without wolf kills, the scavengers of Yellowstone did not get enough food and the coyote killed and ate almost everything besides large prey. Once the gray wolf was reintroduced to Yellowstone, all of these problems vanished. This is incontrovertible proof that if predators were killed into extinction, the entire ecosystem would be in disarray.

Little though some people believe it, predatory animals help aid the human population as well as their own. While some people believe rodents are cute, furry, and cuddly creatures, if they are no longer pursued by predators, they will overpopulate extravagantly, spreading diseases faster than ever before. An event commonly known as the Black Plague (or Black Death), which killed 20 million people from October 1347 to 1351 (Edmonds 1), is a past example of what happens when rodents overpopulate. Modern day scientists had discovered that the plague was spread through bites of contaminated mice, rats, and fleas, or simply through breathing contaminated air (5). More modern examples of illnesses spread through rodents are Hantavirus Pulmunary Syndrome, Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome, Lassa Fever, Leptospirosis, Lymphocytic Chorio-meningitis (LCM), Omsk Hemorrhagic Fever, Rat-Bite Fever, Salmonellosis, South American Arenaviruses (Argentine hemorrhagic fever, Bolivian hemorrhagic fever, Sabiá-associated hemorrhagic fever, Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever), and Tularemia (Diseases Directly Transmitted by Rodents 1). All of these diseases are potentially fatal. Not so cute and cuddly anymore. Mother Nature takes this problem into her own hands by having a food chain that contains animals which eat the easiest way to spread diseases and germs on earth. Not only do predators help humans in this way, but they keep the natural environment healthy and balanced, which is essential for humans as well as wild animals. Because they can help stop another apocalyptic illness spread, predators must not be hunted.

When animals are recently taken off the endangered species list, it is presumed they do not need to be protected any longer, and it is legal to hunt them once more. These animals are just recovering from being critically endangered, and there are still precious few of them left, even if they have been taken off the list. The Gray Wolf just recently came off the endangered list in the fall of 2012 (Ciampanelli 2), and once it was legal to hunt them, more than 550 gray wolves had been killed by hunters and trappers in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming in the 2013 season (“Protected no longer…” 1). And this year, only one season later, the wolves may be classified as endangered yet again (KFBK News. "Gray Wolves May Be Classified Endangered Species Again." 1). These facts suggest a problem lies within the idea of allowing people to hunt endangered animals immediately after they are removed from the endangered species list. Just because they are no longer endangered does not mean their species is no longer struggling to keep their place on the planet.

A lot of people do not like predatory animals because they can kill livestock and people. These feelings are particularly shared between hunters and farmers. In 2006, a post was made by user *Lady’s Human* on a website called *Pet Talk* that said this: “Large predators kill humans fairly routinely” ("What Do You Think of Hunting? [Archive] - Pet Talk." 1). However, statistics have shown only around 199.3 human deaths happen per year in wild animal-related accidents (“Human Deaths in the US...” 1), while 164,000 people die annually from the measles (Shah 1). And one example of how infrequent wild animals kill people, wolves kill only .1 person per year (“Human Deaths in the US…” 1). This proves that sickness kills much more than wild animals, which is why it will cause more harm than good to hunt predators to extinction, for the rodents left over will only cause more sickness to spread more rapidly through the human population. Though the hunters and farmers feel this way, they are rarely seen doing anything about it besides unnecessarily killing the wild animals, and therefore ripping apart the perfectly natural ecosystem that the people have intruded on. Farmers do not like predators going after their livestock, but if humans did not intrude on predator territory so frequently, the animals would have enough space to hunt elsewhere. Another statistic is this: one person is murdered *every minute* by another person ( Holguin 1). And people call predatory animals dangerous.

One solution to these problems is to learn to coexist with predators, by simply realizing there is a better, less barbaric way to deal with predators going after livestock and so forth. Plenty of research has been constructed, and the results show that by simply taking the measure of adopting a watchdog for the flocks helps both farmers and the natural ecosystem. This watchdog would not kill the predators, but simply scare the predator from the livestock he or she is watching by barking. The most popular candidate is the Anatolian Shepherd, which is currently saving Cheetahs from extinction ("GMA: Dogs Help Save Cheetahs from Extinction." 1). To train these dogs, the farmer would simply raise the dog with the livestock rather than with people, so the dog bonds with the flock, and naturally presumes the role of protector. Using watchdogs has proven to reduce livestock losses by as much as 91% (Bussard 1) and depredation is reduced dramatically (TUESDAY TRIBUTE 1), so there is a huge benefit to both the farmer and the predator population. One could also place donkeys or alpacas/llamas in their herds, because they are natural herd animals, and are very protective of their herd. Other ways of lowering livestock loss due to predators are by simply putting a “Livestock Protection Collar” on livestock, or even just shutting livestock up at night will help. One could also perform shepherd duties, or use deterrent devices (noises, lights, or smells). These simple measures can help the natural world dramatically if all farmers practiced them. Instead of being barbaric, humans must find the most “humane” way to getting rid of predators, the best of which is not killing them quickly or painlessly, but not killing them at all.

Another solution to these problems is this: people must actually leave some space for other creatures of the planet. Just because humans are “smarter” does not necessarily mean people get everything on the planet. Though there are 57 national parks in the United States (“National Parks by State” 1), the largest of which (Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve, located in Alaska) only ranges about 13.2 million acres (United States. National Park Service 1), out of the total 2.3 billion acres that make up the United States (Lubowski 1); that is about a 2.28 billion ( 2,286,800,000) still being used by people, and not being made available to the predators that so desperately require it. There are over 7 billion people on this planet (“Current World Population” 1), and that number increases by the hour. People must stop spreading and increasing in numbers so exponentially, to leave more space for the other animals we share this earth with.

Predators must not be hunted. 199.3 people may have been killed in wild animal related accidents, but more than 150 billion animals are killed each year (More Than 150 Billion Animals Slaughtered Every Year 1), not including most wild animals. This is not how humans should treat its planetary kin. With the threat of people increasing, territory for these animals is being restricted dramatically with an estimated 3 to 6 billion trees being cut down every year (Olson 1). This fact is what is making people lose their lives to wild animal accidents, not the animals themselves. A world without predators will only cause devastation to the natural and industrialized world’s alike. Hunting predators must be made illegal worldwide. One reason for this is because it causes the natural food chain to be majorly disrupted. Along with this, it will cause devastation to the human population due to the spread of illness. Another problem is  predators that recently come off of the endangered species list are almost immediately legal to hunt once more. Many hunters and farmers will say wild animals cause a lot of harm because they get into livestock and crops, and they can kill people, but more harm will be caused by killing predators off into extinction. Solutions to all of these problems are simple: Humans must understand and learn to coexist with predatory animals peacefully. Humans also must stop expanding continuously across the globe. Some animals just got off of the endangered species list, and it is now legal to hunt and kill them again. Is this right? Their population is still trying to recover, even if they are currently off the list, they may need to be put on once again very quickly, which could cause them to never fully recover if it continues. We are not the only living things on this planet; hunting predatory animals must not be allowed for the benefit of the entire planet, before it is too late, and they are gone forever.

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