

Animal Endangerment

By Annie Wu

A species of animal can become endangered when it is exposed to consistent harm or danger. A species is **endangered** when the number of animals in its population is dangerously low. Endangerment can lead to **extinction**, or the complete wipe out of an entire species.

What causes animals to become endangered? There are many reasons, but human interference plays a huge role. One major cause is **habitat destruction**. For example, since wetlands have rich soil, humans sometimes fill them in so that they can farm on the nutrient rich soil. Animals that live there either die or have to leave and find other places to eat and find shelter. Often times when these animals are driven away from their homes they cannot find another area with similar conditions or adapt to a new environment. Without the food and shelter they need from their habitat, a species can become endangered, or even extinct.



Another important impact humans have on animal populations is **hunting**. If humans kill too many of a certain type of animal at one time, that species may not be able to reproduce fast enough to increase its population again. Over hunting is so dangerous to animals that many laws have been made to set limits on when hunting is allowed and how many of certain animals hunters can kill.

An example of an endangered species is the Giant Panda of Asia. Giant Pandas are endangered because their habitat is being destroyed. Its primary source of food is bamboo. When their habitat is destroyed, their food source is destroyed too and they cannot survive. Also, sometimes pandas are hunted for their beautiful fur. This also contributes to their endangerment.

Pesticides and **herbicides** (poisons that kill weeds and insects) pollute the soil and water and affect all the living things they come in contact with, not just the weeds and insects they were directed at. These poisons can kill many plants and animals if they are not used carefully. Another form of pollution comes from the burning of fuels. When the fuels are burned they send smoke into the air. The smoke rises up into the



atmosphere and reacts with clouds to form acid rain. Acid rain harms plants, fish and animals.

Human interference is on the top of the list when it comes to the causes of animal endangerment. But there are natural causes too. **Invasive species** and **changing climates** also greatly affect animals.

We can try to help animals that are endangered. Here in the United States, Congress passed the **Endangered Species Act** in 1973. Under this act, the United States watches over the protection and conservation of animals and plants that are endangered. This means that people cannot hunt them or destroy their habitats. Unfortunately, thousands of animals are endangered all over the world. The only way we can try to save them is to reduce pollution, prevent further destruction of natural habitat, limit hunting and encourage successful growth in populations through programs that help animals breed in captivity where they are safe from natural predators as well as humans.