

# ANIMALS IN THE WILD: WHY THEY MATTER

As concern for animals is growing, more and more people think they should not be discriminated against and exploited by humans. This should compel us to regard animals that live in nature too.

Many people think that animals live fantastic lives in the wild and that the only harms they face are the ones that result from human action. Unfortunately, this view does not match what happens in reality. Life in nature is full of hardships and risks for animals.

## WHAT'S THE SITUATION OF ANIMALS IN NATURE?

Animals suffer due to disease, accidents and injuries, hunger and thirst, parasitism, hostile weather conditions, attacks by other animals, and psychological stress. We might think this is not really harmful to them as they are used to it. But suffering and dying is as bad for animals in nature as it is for humans and domesticated animals.

To understand the extent to which wild animals suffer, it's important to consider this: most animals reproduce by laying large amounts of eggs. However, only one offspring per parent survives on average. The rest of them die shortly after coming into existence, often painfully. Most of them starve, are eaten by other animals or die in other ways that cause them to suffer significantly. Because these animals die very young, they don't have the time to have positive experiences. As a result, their lives often contain more suffering than wellbeing. Unfortunately, this happens to the majority of animals.



Some animals don't reproduce this way, such as mammals like primates or big herbivores. But most others (mammals such as mice, and most birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes and invertebrates) do. Most of them die when they are very young. These animals suffer terribly and lose their lives prematurely, just as we or other animals would if we were in their situation.

### AIDING ANIMALS IN NEED OF HELP

Fortunately, there are many different ways we can help animals living in the wild. The variety of ways in which we can help shows us that it is easy to start doing something for them now.

Sometimes nonhuman animals are rescued when they are trapped. These animals include those trapped in frozen lakes, dolphins and whales stranded on beaches, and all kinds of animals fallen into wells, quicksand, or ponds where they would have died otherwise. Sometimes animals are also saved during natural disasters, such as floods or fires. And in rescue centers around the world, orphaned, sick, and injured animals have been assisted and had their lives saved.



On a wider scale, animals are sometimes provided with food during shortage due to heavy snows, droughts or after natural disasters in national parks worldwide where animals are an attraction to tourists. Also, wild animal vaccination programs have been going on for decades and have eradicated diseases such as rabies from huge areas. These measures haven't been carried out for the sake of the animals, but for human interests. Nonetheless, they have immensely benefitted many animals. And they have shown that it's perfectly feasible to implement them for the sake of nonhuman animals themselves.

### A BETTER FUTURE FOR ANIMALS IN THE WILD

All these methods of aiding animals can help many of them today. But more work is required to make sure animals will be assisted in the future. In the long term, the way in which animals will eventually be helped as they need is by animal advocates working now to raise awareness of the plight of these animals and the discrimination they suffer. In fact, in the future, it will be possible to help animals much more significantly, as concern for them grows. For this to happen it's necessary to learn more about how it is possible to help animals without causing more harm to others. More importantly, it's necessary that there is an actual will to help animals. For this reason, it's necessary to raise concern for animals in nature among more and more people.

There are some who oppose helping animals in nature because they claim it's natural that they suffer, or that it's not their plight we should be concerned about, but ecosystems or other natural entities. They say helping animals interferes with the natural course of things in ecosystems. These views are never maintained when it is human beings that are in need: most of us think humans should be helped when they need it, and don't reject doing so because it's natural that they suffer and die. This shows that these positions betray a speciesist viewpoint. That is, they arbitrarily discriminate against nonhuman animals. If we reject all forms of discrimination, we should support helping animals in those situations in which we would like to be helped if we were in their place.

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