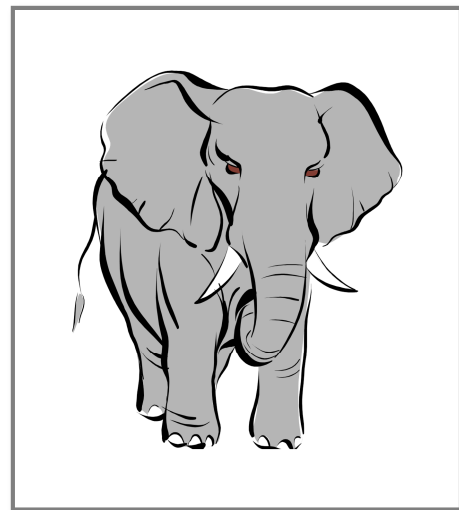


INTEGRITY OF CREATION SERIES: CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILD ANIMALS

Children learn about wild animals from their first picture books. They then develop a greater appreciation for these wonders of God's creation through films, museums and zoos. The more fortunate of us get to see these animals in their natural habitats when we travel to national parks or game preserves around the world.

Wild animals live in very delicate ecosystems, where they roam vast areas in search of food and mates. Today, these treasured animals are facing many dangers, such as human encroachment and poachers. In addition, climate changes around the world are affecting the timing of migrations, the availability of the food they rely on for their sustenance, the range of their grazing lands, and the emergence of new species of plants and insects that could affect their health and wellbeing.

As OLQP continues to focus on the Integrity of God's Creation, we need to connect the dots between our day-to-day activities, and the effect these have on wild animals that may live on distant continents.



The World Wildlife Fund (http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/aboutcc/problems/impacts/species/) identifies a number of animals that are at risk, which include the following:

The **polar bear** could disappear in the wild unless the pace of global warming slows. Dependent on sea ice, the animal uses it as a floating platform to catch prey. Experts believe that the Arctic sea ice is melting ..., endangering the polar bear's habitat and existence.

The **North Atlantic right whale** is one of the most endangered of all large whales.... Since warming waters contain less plankton for whales to feed on, the availability of food due to climate fluctuations is also becoming an increasing cause of mortality. Between 300 and 350 individuals still exist, with little hope of population growth.

In Africa, **elephants** face a range of threats, including shrinking living space, which brings them more frequently into conflict with people. With diminished living space, elephants will be unable to escape any changes to their natural habitat caused by global warming, including more frequent and longer dry periods, placing further pressure on their existence.

Asia's only ape, **the orangutan** is in deep trouble. Its last remaining strongholds in the rainforests of Indonesia are being threatened by a range of pressures, including climate change, putting the animal at risk of extinction within a few decades. With global warming increasing the duration and frequency of droughts, bushfires are occurring more often in these heavily logged forests, further affecting the orangutan's living space.

Experts estimate that there are as few as 3,200 [Indian] **tigers** left in the wild, due to poaching, the loss of their habitat and depletion of the tiger's natural prey. Hunters, traders and poor local residents use the forest for subsistence, directly competing with the tiger. Some of the largest remaining areas where tigers live are the mangrove forests of India. The projected rise in sea levels could cause these living spaces of the tiger to vanish altogether.

Continued....

CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILD ANIMALS (CONTINUED)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. The following organizations are concerned about the impact of climate change on wildlife, as noted from the following information from their web sites.

The World Wildlife Organization (<https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/climate-change>): Sea levels are rising and oceans are becoming warmer. Longer, more intense droughts threaten crops, wildlife and freshwater supplies. From polar bears in the Arctic to marine turtles off the coast of Africa, our planet's diversity of life is at risk from the changing climate. Climate change poses a fundamental threat to the places, species and people's livelihoods WWF works to protect. To adequately address this crisis we must urgently reduce carbon pollution and prepare for the consequences of global warming, which we are already experiencing. WWF works to:

- advance policies to fight climate change
- engage with businesses to reduce carbon emissions
- help people and nature adapt to a changing climate

The Wilderness Society (<http://wilderness.org/blog/why-wildland-lovers-should-care-about-international-climate-change-report>): We knew that climate change was already wreaking havoc on our public lands, but what we didn't know was how widespread that damage actually is. Forest, desert and arctic landscapes are all being profoundly affected by large shifts in climate, according to a new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Defenders of Wildlife (<http://www.defenders.org/climate-change/climate-change-101>): Many people know that climate change is causing Arctic sea ice to melt, which in turn threatens polar bears who need the ice to hunt for food. But climate change causes problems for all wildlife and habitats. For example, warmer waters can kill coral reefs, which countless marine species depend on for food and shelter. Droughts caused by changes in rain patterns reduce food supply such as desert grasses and flowering plants for the critically endangered Sonoran pronghorn. And warmer temperatures increase the amount of time pests have to grow and multiply, like the pine bark beetle that is devastating forests all over North America. Because of the wide variety of impacts it has on the environment, climate change is now one of the leading threats to wildlife and habitats.

YOU CAN DO YOUR PART in mitigating climate change by following some simple green tips from National Geographic Kids (<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/science/green-tips.html>), such as:

- Recycle and Reuse. Set out cans and bottles for neighborhood pickup, or exchange them for cash at a recycling center. Most community trash services will pick up your recycled bottles and cans.
- The next time you have an impulse to buy a new book to read, borrow it from the library or a friend instead of buying a new copy. Sharing books is a great way to reduce waste and reuse materials.
- Buy toys that last. Toys are made, directly or indirectly, from natural resources. Choose toys that won't break easily so you aren't always buying more stuff or creating more trash.
- Participate in cleanup days at a beach or park. Use those outdoor trash cans! Never litter. Keep our waterways clean. When you visit a park or beach, be sure you deposit your trash in containers and volunteer at some state and national cleanups.
- Don't kill that spider! There are an estimated 40,000 species of spiders, and they all eat insects. They're an important part of the food web and provide natural pest control.
- Don't litter. Trash tossed carelessly outside often washes into storm drains, which empty into rivers and streams that eventually flow to the oceans. Pollution is a growing problem for all the Earth's ocean and its wildlife.
- Don't pile your plate. "When's dinner?" you want to know. You're starving after a long day at school! Even so, restrain yourself and take only what you know you'll really be able to eat. Enough edible food to feed 49 million people ends up in landfills in the United States each year.
- Celebrate Earth Day. On April 22, celebrate by starting a new Earth-friendly habit. Spread the word! The more people who treat the Earth well, the safer all its inhabitants will be.