



May 2023

Human Nature



Projects Ontario Newsletter

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EXECUTIVE OF THE MONTH

CONGRATS

The word 'CONGRATS' is written in large, bubbly letters. The 'C', 'N', 'G', and 'R' are in a light green color, while the 'O', 'A', 'T', and 'S' are in white. The letters are connected by thin lines that converge at a central point below the word, resembling a starburst or a cluster of lines.

Puneet Khaira

A white decorative flourish on the left side of the page, consisting of a vertical line with several loops and a small starburst at the top. There are also two small white starburst symbols near the top right of the text box.

Hello! My name is Puneet and I'm a grade 9 student in British Columbia. My interests include swimming, tennis, cooking, and coding. I joined HNP because I want to raise awareness about climate change and the importance of sustainability! I'm so excited to work with like-minded peers and to contribute to the fight against climate change!

SECRETARY

THE LOSS OF WETLANDS AROUND THE WORLD

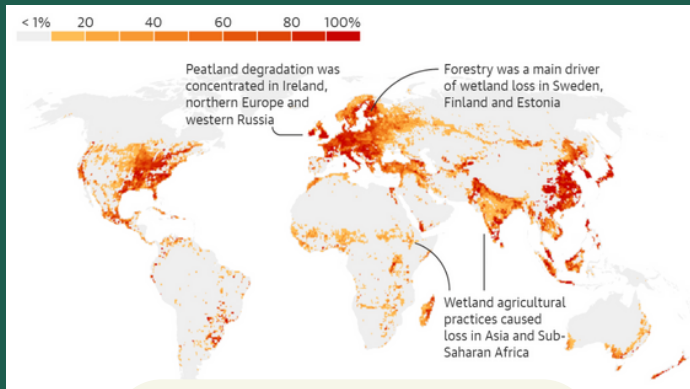


Figure 1: Wetland Cover Loss
(The Guardian, n.d)

IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

Wetlands are geographical regions where the water level remains at or above the surface of the ground for the majority of the year. They can be found in freshwater and saltwater habitats and include marshes, swamps, bogs, and fens. One of the world's most productive ecosystems are wetlands. No other habitat can match the benefits provided by wetlands. Numerous plant and animal species, many of which are uncommon or endangered, depend on them for large amounts of food. These animals spend all or a portion of their life cycle in wetlands. Dead plant stems and leaves decompose in the water to produce tiny organic particles known as "detritus." Many small aquatic species that serve as prey for larger predatory animals are fed by this material. They offer crucial ecological services such carbon storage, water filtration, and flood control. Wetlands act as organic sponges, absorbing and gradually releasing floodwaters, rainwater, snowmelt, and surface water. The distribution of flood waters over the floodplain is additionally slowed down by trees, root mats, and other wetland vegetation. Our safety and welfare can be protected by protecting wetlands.

INTRODUCTION

Wetlands are vital ecosystems that offer numerous ecological and economic advantages. They support local livelihoods, help to maintain water quality, and are home to a wide variety of plant and animal species. Despite their significance, human activity has resulted in the loss of one-fifth of the world's wetlands since 1700, with the majority of these losses taking place in Europe, China, and the US. To get a more accurate worldwide picture, researchers integrated global history records with maps of today's wetlands. They discovered that 20% of all wetlands had been lost. With Ireland losing more than 90% of its wetlands, Germany, Lithuania, and Hungary losing more than 80%, and the UK, the Netherlands, and Italy losing more than 75%, Europe was the region most severely impacted (Weston, 2023).

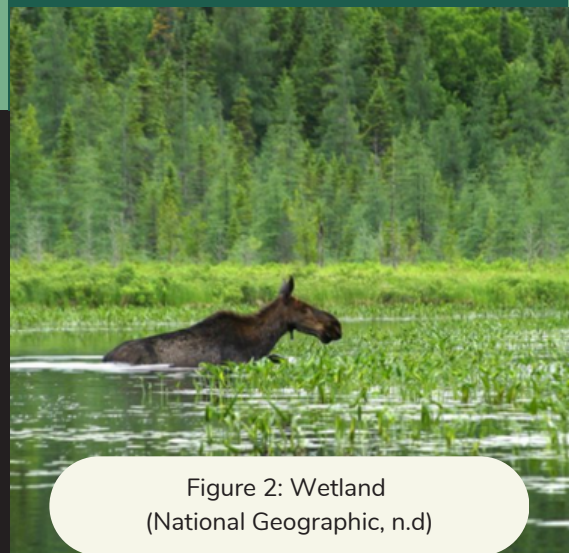


Figure 2: Wetland
(National Geographic, n.d)

THE LOSS OF WETLANDS AROUND THE WORLD



Figure 3: Restoring European Wetlands
(Nature Today, n.d)

CAUSE OF LOSS

Wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate despite their significance. Numerous environmental factors, such as erosion, land subsidence, droughts, sea level change, and storms, can have an impact on the development of wetlands. But throughout the past few centuries, human activities have been responsible for the vast majority of wetland losses and gains. Agriculture, urbanization, industrial growth, as well as practices such as drainage, damming, and mining, are the main causes of wetland loss. For many years, wetlands have been filled or drained for agriculture or construction, which has resulted in the loss of habitat and many other crucial wetland services. Wetlands have been drained for thousands of years because farmers have considered them to be unproductive soil. However, throughout the last century, the pace of destruction has sharply accelerated. This has rendered wetlands one of the planet's most endangered ecosystems, due to the effects of the climate crisis, groundwater extraction, fires, and increasing sea levels. When farmers were subsidized by the government to drain land in North America, Europe, and China to make fertile ground for agriculture and forestry, the destruction rose in the 1950s.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

It is crucial to act locally and globally in order to combat the disappearance of wetlands. In order to stop the rapid loss of wetlands and promote conservation and restoration efforts, it is crucial that we increase national and international awareness of them. This may entail taking steps to preserve and restore already-existing wetlands as well as developing new wetlands through restoration initiatives. We should work to alter attitudes so that communities and governments would value and prioritize wetlands. Governments can also take action to control land use and development near wetlands and to support environmentally friendly industrial and agricultural operations that have no negative impact on wetlands.

“ It’s essential that we stop looking at wetlands as wastelands, there for us to drain and repurpose into ‘useful’ land. ”

- Dr Christian Dunn, from Bangor University and chair of the British Ecological Society Welsh Policy Group.

APRIL CENTENNIAL PARK COMMUNITY CLEANUP EVENT RECAP



HNP ONTARIO'S APRIL 2023 CENTENNIAL PARK
COMMUNITY CLEANUP WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!
WE HAD OVER 200 VOLUNTEERS HELP CLEAN UP
OUR BEAUTIFUL PARK! THANK YOU SO MUCH TO
EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED THIS EVENT!

APRIL CENTENNIAL PARK COMMUNITY CLEANUP EVENT RECAP



THE DEPLETION OF THE PROBOSCIS MONKEY

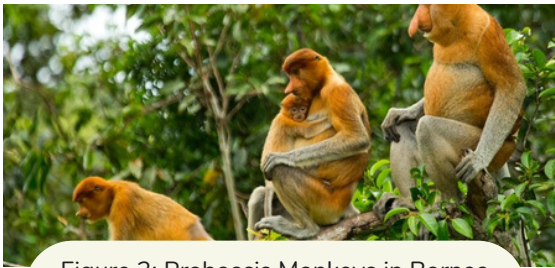


Figure 3: Proboscis Monkeys in Borneo
(New England Primate Conservancy, 2015)

INTRODUCTION

The Proboscis monkey is an incredibly unique and distinct species, recognized for their large, probe-like noses. Nicknamed the “Cows of the Canopy” (BBC, 2015), this species resides in the Borneo forest, located on the Equator in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, over the years, Proboscis monkeys have become an endangered species. With only about an estimated 20,000 left in the forests of Borneo, (New England Primate Conservancy, 2015) with the depletion of Proboscis monkeys comes the depletion of its habitat and an imbalance in the relationship between predators and prey. Before learning about how to prevent the extinction of Proboscis monkeys, it is important to recognize their characteristics, roles and abilities as complex primates.



Figure 4: The Proboscis Monkey eating leaves (Hakai Magazine, 2020)

THE BIOLOGY

Nasalis larvatus, also known as the Proboscis monkey, are mammals, apart of the primate family. They are widely recognized for their probe-like noses, a physical trait only male Proboscis monkeys possess. They are omnivores, with their diet mostly consisting of leaves, seeds, unripe fruits and occasionally, insects. Spanning between 24 and 28 inches, (New England Primate Conservancy, 2015) Proboscis monkeys have a unique digestive system consisting of 8 stomachs (Hakai Magazine, 2020). The design of their digestive system allows them to digest and chew the cud within the leaves. In comparison to most monkeys, they are good swimmers, diving into nearby waters to travel in search of food. Their ability to swim comes from their evolved trait of webbed feet. This makes the Proboscis monkey an efficient animal, whether they're on land or in water.

THE DEPLETION OF THE PROBOSCIS MONKEY

PREDATORS AND DEFORESTATION

As the number of Proboscis monkeys continues to deplete, three factors can be attributed to the reducing number: deforestation, illegal hunting and a surplus of predators. Deforestation in Borneo sustains at a rate of 1.7%, although in mangrove forests, the rate increases up to 7.92% (New England Primate Conservancy, 2015). The extermination of rainforests in Borneo are caused by the production of timber, palm oil plantations and settlements, depleting massive regions of the proboscis monkey's habitat. Without a habitat, Proboscis monkeys are vulnerable to illegal hunting and predators. Humans hunt Proboscis monkeys as a delicacy or in some cases, for the bezoar stones found in their stomachs to produce traditional Chinese medicine (New England Primate Conservancy, 2015). While they are vulnerable to humans, with the depletion of their habitat, they are vulnerable to nearby predators such as the crocodile and jaguar. Proboscis monkeys are "forced to descend from trees more frequently and often must travel perilously long distances to find food" (BBC, 2015).

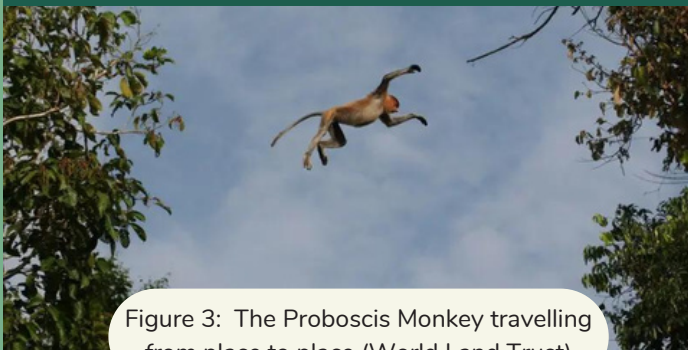


Figure 3: The Proboscis Monkey travelling from place to place (World Land Trust)

PREVENTION

The Proboscis monkey is officially listed as an endangered species under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The IUCN Red List is prominent for reporting about the several endangered and extinct species of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and more. An estimate of about 20,000 Proboscis monkeys are still left in the wild (IUCN, 2015). Organizations such as the WWF are dedicated to saving and protecting endangered species such as the Proboscis monkey, urging people to cut back on deforestation and donate money to their conservation and protection (WWF, 2023). Government legislation is necessary to protect Proboscis monkeys but as of now, Indonesia has not spoken up about protecting Borneo forests.

CONCLUSION

The Proboscis monkey is one of the most uniquely evolved species in the forests of Borneo. From their probe-like noses to their complex digestive systems to their ability to swim and thrive in rainforest environments, they are incredibly gifted in their ability to thrive as a species. With the loss of their habitat and surplus of predators, however, the global population could be saying a permanent farewell to this species of primate. To protect, conserve and ensure the survival of Proboscis monkeys, the push for wildlife organizations and governments for mandates and support are necessary.



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