

What is wildlife, and its value? Why is it important to preserve wildlife?



Parks and Wildlife Act [Chapter 20:14] defines wildlife to mean, ‘any kind of vertebrate animal and the eggs and young thereof, whether live or dead, other than domestic animals and fish.’

In simple terms, wildlife means wild animals collectively; the native fauna (and sometimes flora) of a region.

Wildlife traditionally refers to **undomesticated animal species** but has come to include all organisms that grow or live wild in an area without being introduced by humans. Wildlife was also synonymous with the game: those birds and mammals that were hunted for sport. Wildlife can be found in all ecosystems.

What is the value of wildlife?

As part of the world’s ecosystems, wildlife provides **balance and stability to nature’s processes**. The goal of wildlife conservation is to ensure the survival of these species and to educate people on living sustainably with other species.



The values of wildlife can thus be classified as direct and indirect. Direct values are considered thus:

Consumptive use value: the non-market value of firewood, game.

Productive use value: commercial value of timber, fish.

It is because of this value that laws are in place to govern the use, possession, and treatment of wildlife to avoid extinction and abuse.

The intrinsic value of wildlife?

It refers to the value it possesses, as opposed to its instrumental value, and its value to other animals (including human beings).

This in simpler terms refers to the benefits that animal project to human beings and nature.



Animal advocates are mainly concerned about the intrinsic value of an animal more than anything else. An inherent value may be either moral, ethical, or a result of emotional attachment.

There is no monetary value that can be used as a benchmark when asserting the intrinsic value of animals.

Extrinsic value

Mainly determined by external factors and it emanates from the human desire to benefit from animals.

This is also known as the Utilitarian system. It functions by placing a monetary value on what humans benefit from animals.



Five basic values of animals.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic values of animals can be broken down into basic values.

1- **Commercial**- the use of wildlife to generate money

2- **Aesthetic value**- the enjoying of wildlife's beauty and pleasure



3- **Scientific value**- studying and researching wildlife for their use in medications, integrated pest management, etc

4- **Ecological value**- the interaction and interdependency between nature and wildlife

5- **Game value**- the enjoyment and value obtained from hunting and fishing



Classification of animals

There are several categories where animals fall. The classification to be considered for this research is according to schedules 6th, 8th, and 9th Schedules of the PWA.

CLASSIFICATION	EXAMPLES
Specially protected animals	Rhinoceros, Pangolin, Cheetah, Roan Antelope, fish eagle, gemsbok, aardwolf, bat-eared fox, wild dog

Problem Animals	Baboon, spotted hyena, black-backed jackal
Dangerous Animals	Lion, Buffalo, Elephant, Hippopotamus, Leopard

Why is it important to preserve wildlife?

1. Promotes pollination and continuity of native plant species

Small animals, particularly bees, insects, butterflies, and birds, play an important role in food production. Conservation of these animals, therefore, aid in pollination.

2. Medicinal value

Although plants are the major sources of medications, some animals are also vital in the production of medications. For example, the venom from cobra is an important ingredient in making medications for leprosy while lobsters can be used as antifungals.

3. Aesthetic benefits

Watching animals in their natural habitat is not only fun but also relaxing. People always go for holidays in areas under conservation such as zoos, game parks, lakes, oceans, forests, and mountains for activities such as camping, fishing, boat riding, and hiking, just to mention a few.



4. It is entertaining!

People spend hours on their television watching wild animal documentaries as their source of fun and entertainment. Failing to conserve wildlife and their habitat will mean that there will be no more animal documentation and thus, a lack of entertainment.

5. Preserves heritage and culture

Conserving wildlife means conserving heritage and traditional culture. Some places are known for their flora and fauna native practices and ways of livelihood, which means that failing to conserve the environment will lead to the loss of their land and native heritage.

6. Promotes tourism attraction

The reason why most people choose to visit a certain country over others is basically due to the country's fauna and flora, as well as natural habitats such as forests, mountains, and water bodies.



7. Protection of biodiversity and endangered species

In the jungle, a lot of animals depend on each other through food chains and food webs. For example, carnivores like lions, cheetahs, and leopards depend on herbivores like antelopes for their survival. If antelopes become extinct in the jungle, the effect can be detrimental to the survival of the cats.

8. Protecting ecological stability and balance

Conserving fauna and flora encourage ecological stability and balance in the world. Plants, for example, play an important role in ensuring a healthy ecosystem by balancing carbon dioxide and oxygen in the environment.

9. Can enhance food security

Among the most fundamental roles of wildlife conservation to humans is to enhance food security. By protecting natural habitats from degradation and forests against deforestation, the availability of a variety of food products would rise.

10. Education and learning

Studying wildlife and its habitat is an important learning experience for children, students, and scholars of all ages. Watching animals helps children to

conceptualize ideas and develop their imagination, which is important for their growth.



11. Important for the identification of new plant and animal species for research

Despite the increased animal research over the last decades, it is estimated that a significant number of animals and plants are not yet discovered. When one puts into consideration the fact that most human medications came from microbial organisms, animals, and plants, it highlights the need to conserve wildlife and its habitats.

12. Economic benefits associated with tourism

13. Creation of jobs

Wildlife has helped create thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly. For example, in places where there are wild animals, whether it is a zoo or a game park, it is common to find people working in those areas.

14. Protects the livelihoods and knowledge of indigenous people

The people living around the forest areas and natural ecosystems such as lakes and rivers always depend on these resources for their livelihoods such as harvesting timber and firewood for construction and cooking respectively fish for survival, and traditional medicines, fruits, vegetables, and survival food.

15. It serves as a preserve for future generations

If conservation measures are not put in place, future generations will not have a chance to see some of the wild animals that exist today.



16. Protecting wildlife and their habitats means fewer diseases that affect humans

For the sake of human health, it is crucial to protect wildlife and their habitat. There are fewer cases of malaria and Lyme disease in diverse, protected natural regions, according to research.



