

Why extinction matters

Sanjida O'Connell explains the impact of losing animal species and how this will affect us.

Species have always died out naturally. Creatures like these, though were alive for millions of years before they went extinct. But conservationists now think that species are declining at the rates of 1000 to 10,000 times faster than they would, if humans were not around.

I've been a wildlife broadcaster for over 15 years now and in that time I have seen some of the less known species numbers fall to worrying levels. We don't know when these species are going to go extinct but what we do know is that some of them are on their way out.

Does it matter ...what would be the impact of losing a few species when we do have so many?

If one species were to die out, the impact would not be immediately obvious. But because each species plays a role within the ecosystem if we lose that species, its role will no longer be fulfilled and that will result in a biodiversity crisis.

For example Fruit-eating monkeys and birds play a vital role in spreading the seeds of huge hard-wooded trees. If you lose some of those creatures you lose the trees and that's a problem, because tropical rainforests store up 40% of Earth's carbon emissions.

So there's the link ...lose the seed spreaders... lose the trees...
...and if we lose the trees, we lose the very thing that combats climate change.

To put it simply, the loss of one species has a ripple effect on everything around it... not least of all, on us humans.