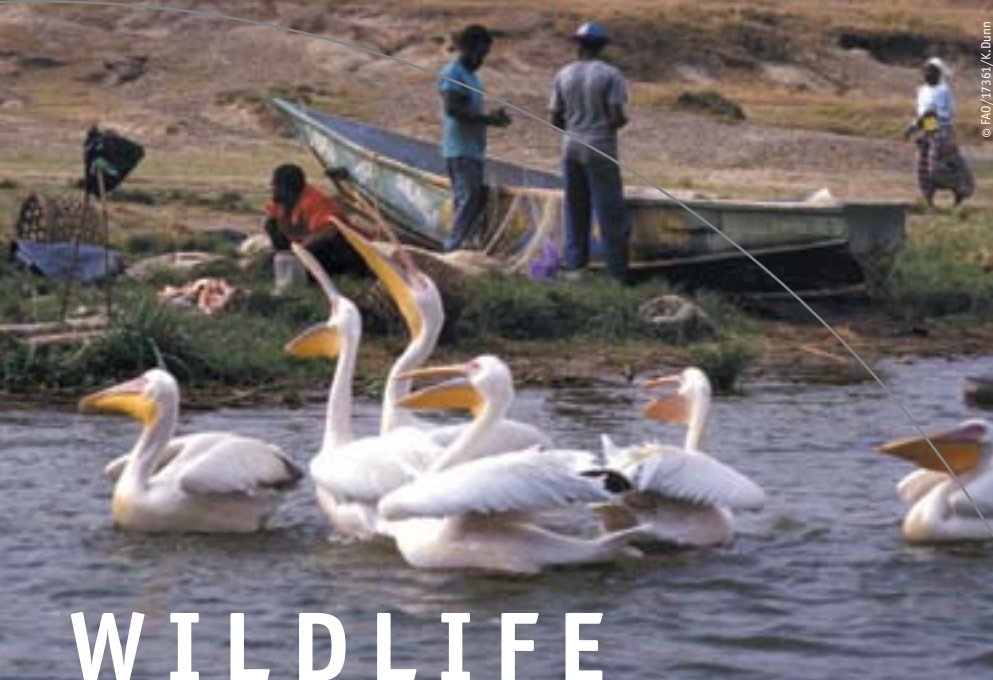




WILDLIFE BIODIVERSITY

The term “wildlife” refers to all non-domesticated animals. It thus singles out one component of biodiversity.

In historical terms it is understandable that wildlife is singled out in this way. The earliest humans were hunter gatherers, whose lives were intimately involved with what we now refer to as wildlife. An eloquent testimony to its importance, which included a strong spiritual component, is to be found in the rock art in which it is so magnificently portrayed. It also features strongly in traditional poetry and song.

In the sense that wildlife is currently one of the most threatened components of biodiversity, there is a reason for also singling it out in the contemporary world.



Wildlife faces a number of dire threats.

Perhaps the most ominous of these, because at present it is the least controllable, is the commercialization of trade in wild meat and animal parts for use in traditional medicine.

Wild meat is particularly important in Africa.

The medicinal aspect is especially important in Asia.

Other severe threats to wildlife are habitat loss, due to conversion of forest to other land uses, and habitat fragmentation, due to road construction and other infrastructural developments.

The challenges posed by these threats have generated a steep learning curve for conservationists and managers.





In historical terms, the scientifically based conservation and management of wildlife is a very new enterprise, which began in earnest only in the twentieth century. Until around 30 years ago it consisted mainly of singling out areas rich in wildlife for complete protection in national parks or other types of protected area.

A paramilitary approach to the enforcement of conservation laws was taken, which frequently resulted in confrontation and conflict with people living in and around protected areas. This approach persists in some places, but is rapidly being replaced by a much more complex and demanding approach, which is based on the recognition of realities which were previously ignored. In ecological terms, it is now understood that most forest biodiversity is found outside protected areas, which means that much greater investment of time and resources has to be made in conserving and managing biodiversity through sustainable forest management in production landscapes. In socio-economic terms it is recognized that people living in and around protected areas have both rights and needs, and that unless these are accommodated, effective protected area management will be impossible. To accomplish this, accommodation approaches have been and are being developed, including co-management, community based natural resource management and transboundary resource area management.

Conservationists and managers are also having to address the aspirations of growing human populations for improved living standards, rather than mere survival. Integrated Conservation and Development Projects are one of the approaches to this issue that are being tested. Alliances of conservation and development NGOs with local communities is another innovative approach that is increasingly being adopted.



Learn more:
www.fao.org/forestry/Forestry.asp

Further information about the work of
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