

Conservation Report

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Fernando Selles, Chilliwack Field Naturalists

Most people that are aware of the insecure future of mankind and social structures, relate this uncertainty to the effects of human-induced Climate Change. However, compounding the nefarious effects of Climate Change, there is a drastic reduction of biodiversity, due to lack of protection of nature, that makes our future on earth even more uncertain.

An article published by truthout.org on May 5, 2019 stated that “A [new landmark United Nations report](#) on biodiversity set for release on Monday will say that a perilous and miserable future awaits the natural world and human civilization unless we rapidly bring an end to humanity’s destructive “business as usual” approach to the economy, food production, and energy usage.”

The United Nation’s report launched today (May 6, 2019) at the UNESCO world headquarters in Paris, was compiled by 145 leading international expert-authors from 50 countries, with further contributions from 315 contributing authors. The report published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), aims to inform policy-makers in producing better policies and actions to save the planet in the coming decade.

A press release by IPBES states unequivocally that “The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.”

The report also tells us that we can still make a difference through transformative changes, “but only if we start now at every level from local to global.” IPBES defines transformative changes as “a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values.”

[In the IPBES media release](#) Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’, there are more details about the extent and depth of the environmental degradation and its consequences for mankind detailed in the UN’s report. One of the main conclusions of the report is that we must consider decline of biodiversity together with climate change when implementing actions to preserve the environment and quality of life on earth.

Although the situation is dire, changes in personal life style, including our responsibilities as citizens, will be the ultimate force that will change the path of environmental degradation that threatens the well-being, and even survival of our grandchildren. It is only with a movement starting at the grassroots that change will happen. We must hold corporations and legislators responsible for the deterioration of our environment. Corporations for irresponsible exploitation of natural resources to maximize their outrageous profits, and legislators for allowing corporations to do so. Also it is our duty to hold the media responsible for their role in ignoring science and hiding, or misrepresenting, the true issue of environmental degradation from the public.

Carbon Footprint. **Zachery Pelletier, Métis, SFU Environmental Science.¹**

It seems that each time I look out the window from above my desk, I am taken aback by the incredible beauty of Mother Earth and Father Sky. All we see around us has been changing for years, and the shifts are only growing with time. The implications of a changing climate are very real and becoming more evident every day.

We will see profound changes in what indigenous communities have known and have depended on for thousands of years, such as abundant wild salmon, Cariboo, and medicinal plants. Unless we acknowledge the issue of climate change, this pervasive problem may cause irreparable damage to the land and our relationship to it.

Basically, climate change is the shift in long-held weather patterns – which then affect such things as sea-levels, the global average temperature, and more. In Northern British Columbia, for example, we are starting to find patches of dead or dying yellow cedar trees, likely caused by melting snow which would normally insulate the roots.

Dying trees increase the risk of wild fires which transform forests from carbon sequesters into carbon emitters. In the prairies of central Canada, we are seeing the grasslands being converted into infertile deserts. These are scary revelations that may lead some to give into the doom and gloom of the situation. Even so, we cannot give up hope, and we should do what we can for the land and our future generations.

Here are some ways we can help as individuals: The transportation sector alone contributes 19.2% of carbon emissions and has a potential to reduce emissions by 4%. Taking public transportation, choosing fuel efficient hybrid or electric vehicles, or using a carpool, can help by lowering the amount of fuel used and carbon dioxide expelled.

By eating less meat and dairy (e.g. ‘Meatless Mondays’), carbon emissions will be reduced because raising livestock requires converting forested land (which naturally stores carbon) into grazing land, where livestock produce gaseous and solid wastes. At this time, 33% of the entire earth’s surface is currently used for livestock production and it has been shown that the rise of meat and dairy consumption creates 14.5% of the world’s entire greenhouse emissions. Remember, less meat less heat.

Buying and consuming fewer things in general, especially items which are not locally produced, is an incredibly powerful thing to do because every item sold has potential environmental damage at every stage of its “life”. This includes extraction, manufacturing, usage, waste, and the transportation between all of these steps. Summer is a great time to take advantage of local produce and reduce the impact of your food. Eating seasonally and locally can reduce the carbon footprint of your food by up to 10%. Even converting to low emission (LED) lighting, turning off and unplugging computers, televisions, and other electronic appliances will help over time.

While making those changes above is great, these issues cannot be resolved wholly as individuals; the best way to help is by working as a community. By getting involved locally, and supporting environmental initiatives, such as community gardens or green spaces, which allow our youth to see something natural in the otherwise greyness of a city. By pressuring the municipal government for better programs, such as better recycling programs, more renewable/ green-energy sectors, or better public transit, we are creating more accessible means to help. Just by joining the conversation with members of the community and speaking out against environmental injustice is a crucial step – many people are unaware of what is happening. Together, our voices may even reach the ears of the governments who do not seem to acknowledge that Mother Earth is not just a resource.

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