

## Press Release



Pic: Herbert Futterknecht

### **Extinct is forever**

„What’s gone, is gone“

What sprouts so succinctly from the mouths of Rhinelanders is especially relevant when it comes to nature: Animal species die out.

Sharkproject wants to create awareness for the fact that ‘this, in itself, is wrong’.

Nature is a complexly interlinked system, fine-tuned over millions of years. Every building block has a purpose, each space is occupied. As a result, everything is interrelated and, most importantly, interdependent. A giant puzzle of interlocking pieces.

If you remove even one building block out of the system then the entire framework can be thrown off balance. The picture will not only look incomplete – it will literally have a hole.

Sometimes the hole won't even be noticeable because other species will move in to close the gap. The system will continue to function and progress in much the same way as it always has. What happens, however, when holes appear for which there are no species able to fill the gap? What if none of the existing species qualify for this piece of the puzzle? What if it takes too long for evolution to kit other species out with the necessary tools?

Then, the holes remain – and the entire system starts falling apart.

If, for example, one were to remove the big sharks from the top of the oceanic food chain, then the fish one step down the ladder will have no natural predators and will multiply exponentially. Their expanding numbers will rapidly consume all of the animals one step below them on the food chain. These will, in turn, be depleted to the point of extinction – and so the imbalance will continue to cascade down throughout the entire system. A once healthy ocean teeters out of control. Once toppled, it will have a significant impact on Earth's climate, water- and air-balance. The fact is that only a healthy ocean will reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere and, concurrently, produce more than fifty percent of the oxygen that we breathe. When the oceans and the climate start to undergo considerable change mankind will quite literally have their very existence threatened.

The great tragedy of the extinction of important species is: once they are gone, there is no turning back. Extinct species cannot be bred back into existence. We cannot tinker away and create sharks – evolution took millions of years to get it right.

Even without the perceptible repercussions for humans:

Animals are living creatures on our beautiful planet and, for this reason alone, worthy of protection.

No species should become extinct simply because humans aren't prepared to conserve resources, because we certainly know enough to be able to protect the biodiversity.

The fact is, that it is often far easier for us to look the other way. And then there is the well-oiled machine of profiteers, of corporations and decision-makers, who use this apathy of the masses to their own (financial) advantage while quite willingly accepting the disintegration of ecosystems.

This cannot be the right way to proceed.

It is, in itself, wrong'.

Because: "Extinct is forever" does not only apply to animals...

It applies just as much to mankind.

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