The United Nations Global Biodiversity Outlook took place October 2020, illuminating the state of biodiversity. In the last decade, not one government has met targets meant to curb biodiversity loss. With the new pledge to reverse biodiversity loss comes the opportunity to broaden our scope of biodiversity and renew focus on the larger factors that aid in biodiversity.

Every movement has its leaders. Biodiversity conservation primarily revolves around bees, trees, and large, sensationalized mammals. Imbued in the term biodiversity is the variety of life and focusing our attention on a flashy few goes against the very meaning of the term. Rooting for the Jaguar is just as important as rooting for the grasshoppers contained to the Sky Islands of Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico. Since public support translates to monetary support, there is a similar bias in funds available for these overlooked species. This is the case for plants as well, with 40% of plant species at risk of extinction. While singular iconic species can be useful in raising awareness for conservation, forming the idea of complex systems that rely on all its members instead serves the spirit of biodiversity.

Pollinators are one such group that can suffer from tunnel vision. Honeybees serve as the icon of pollinators, but there are so many more species that contribute to pollination. The favoritism of the honeybees are centered around their work for humans, but pollinating is necessary for 90% of plants, allowing whole ecosystems to function. The variety of life applies to not just the number of species present, but the different function and specialties among the species. Conservation practices are leaning towards issuing protections on species that are not declining, but simply worth protecting for the ecosystem function they provide. Rarer species are also misunderstood. Their rarity misrepresents their importance, as they often have a disproportionately large impact in ecological systems.

The forest is a landscape held above others for the presence of trees. While trees do aid in absorbing CO2 and the negative impacts of climate change, mangroves and tidal marshes trap more carbon than forests, but do not receive the same amount of attention. The trend of planting more trees can be harmful if done hastily, as they can become green deserts with less biodiversity. More than trees are needed for a healthy ecosystem, down to the microorganisms in the soil, factors that are looked over in larger conservation efforts.

The species that maintain biodiversity span many ecosystems but still work together in a complex system that cannot simply be separated. Relying on marketable species in conservation efforts clouds the true beauty of biodiversity. “*Importance must be given to all species, whether beautiful or not, numerous or not, visible or not*(Quinney, 2020).*”*

Citation

Quinney, M. (2020, November 02). Ugly species deserve biodiversity protections, too. Retrieved March 21, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/worldeconomicforum/2020/11/02/ugly-species-deserve-biodiversity-protections-too/?sh=7cf1ebab1cfd>