



eChapter 18

Natural Habitat

Habitat can be defined as the place where an organism or group of organisms (population) lives, including the surrounding physical environment and the complex interaction in the area of all other organisms. On a larger scale, landscapes are interdependent habitats, usually with overlapping, loosely defined boundaries.

Human activities in recent years have resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation on a scale and at a rate without precedence in the two-billion-year history of life on Earth.

As the human population increases, land is used for:

- Agricultural fields and livestock production
- Housing developments
- Commercial and industrial developments
- Roads, railroads, airports
- Power generation and transmission networks
- Water management systems to serve humans.

In addition, habitat is being lost due to global warming, rising sea levels, deforestation, desertification, surface mining, and human-caused pollution of air, water, and soil.



DONATE: You can help environmental organizations increase wildlife habitat:

- [The Nature Conservancy](#) (programs worldwide)
- [Wildlife Habitat Council](#) (eastern U.S.A.)
- [Ducks Unlimited](#) (wetlands in U.S.A.)

Compounding the problem of habitat loss is habitat fragmentation, where native habitat is reduced to patches or corridors that are isolated from each other. This patchwork quilt of fragmented habitats is susceptible to reduced gene pools for surviving species and invasion by non-native species.

Habitat restoration and preservation is the key to protecting biodiversity.