

The Forgotten Cave Fauna



Summary

Given the prevalence of subterranean ecosystems around the world and the importance they hold for not just animals but people as well, there needs to be more attention and efforts directed towards cave conservation projects. However, the limited availability of information has been acting as a barrier to such projects. Therefore, a document that can serve as a guide to DTA and other similar advocate groups can be a useful tool.

Importance of Caves

Groundwater

Billions of people depend on groundwater for daily use. Amid growing global population, sustainable management of groundwater is essential. Understanding and protecting the caves are therefore essential as well since much of groundwater is found in subterranean environments. In the US, 40% of groundwater is found in subterranean environments.

Providing shelter and other resources to many species, such as:

Bats

As the most populous mammal in the world, bats are essential for our wellbeing as well. As the only major predator of night flying insects, their absence would lead to uncontrolled insect population growth, and subsequent crop failure and economic damage.

The Unknown

Because so little is known about caves and there remains much to be explored, many other disciplines may see significant advancements thanks to caves in the future.

Background

Often hundreds of thousands of years old, caves are home to much of our previous history. Caves in which the touch and presence of our ancestors still reverberate continue to be found today, teaching us more about them, and subsequently, us. But unbeknownst to many, caves have been and are home to much life as well. Many species, including those especially important to their habitat (keystone species), depend on caves for shelter and other resources.

Possibly offering the key to anti-cancer drugs

There is a consensus in the scientific community that caves could play a crucial role in the development of anti-cancer drugs. The intensified competition between organisms facilitated by the conditions in the caves may have encouraged the development and use of antimicrobial agents that could prove to be useful to our study of medicine, even those for cancer.

Bears

Not only are they adorable, bears positively contribute to their ecosystem through several ways. They help to make the forest fertile by dragging salmon carcasses through the forest, act as seed dispersion agents, and maintain the ecosystem balance by preying on animals like deer and moose and controlling the population.

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Problem

The limited availability of information and research is acting as a formidable barrier not only to securing our supply of groundwater and studying medicine but conserving and protecting animals in caves as well.

Solution

A document that can serve as a **comprehensive guide to DTA** and other advocate groups can be a very useful tool. The document would provide items such as:

- Extinction risk and conservation status of some of the species living in the caves
- Major threats
- Action plans for protecting the species
- A picture of what is unknown so that groups can target specific subjects/topics to fill gaps

Because the document can be easily updated and added on to with additional information as they come out, it can be a very versatile tool for the community as a whole.

Finally, the document will direct much needed attention and efforts to an underserved area in conservation and promote securing a better future for all animals and their habitats.

How will it be done?

The guide will be produced by compiling and organizing the information that is already available, using books, the IUCN red list, and research papers on caves and animals living in them.