

WORLD **ENVIRONMENT** DAY
GBCSL ENVIRONMENT WEEK
5TH - 11TH JUNE 2021

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION



Let us Pause... Let Nature Breathe...

Let me start with a brutal statement. Covid 19 pandemic has its own merits!!!

Anshul Chopra is a nature photographer from Jalandhar in Punjab. He enjoys his breakfast leisurely owing to the lockdown due to the pandemic. He hears a delightful cry from upstairs: "Look! The mountains are visible". He climbs upstairs. For the first time in his lifetime, he sees the mountain range of the Himalayas 200 kilometers away. Breathtaking sight has been there behind the smog. This is not months after the lockdown, but just twelve days!!!

Sea Turtles are known to be endangered for as long as we remember. Thus, we protect them. However, do we? Juno Beach in Florida is a known site for laying eggs of sea turtles. They lay their eggs leisurely now. Not on usual numbers, but on a staggeringly high scale. Furthermore, the chance of survival of the newborn has drastically increased due to the absence of us. Have we been protecting them all along? Highly doubtful. This is just one month after the closure.

Humpback whales had to share the water with noisy ships in Alaska for the known history. We just watch, not disturbing them. However, don't we? They now have water on their own. The water is 25 times quieter now. Scientists hear voices that they have never heard, the voices of whales. Mother communicates with her calf. Now the mother can leave her offspring to play while she hunts, knowing that she can hear if the calf is in trouble. Therefore, the nursing whale is well fed now. The calves are safe and growing. Best time ever!!!

A resident in Saint Lucia, South Africa, is filling gas to his car. Not as frequently as usual due to the closure due to the pandemic. He suddenly turns back. A hippo!!! A real, well-alive hippo is having a jog it seems. How free must he be feeling!!!

Sika Deer has been going along well with humans in Nara, Japan. It has adapted well and blended with society. It walks among tourists, shows a bit of respect, nods its head, and earns a rice bran cracker. Oops!!! Tourists have stopped. For once, it seems like the absence of humans may have a negative impact. However, does it? An elder deer steps out. Walks along the road and crosses a few with his herd! He navigates them to a place where they were feeding ages ago. Not bran crackers, but real grass as it is intended to be. Healthier and tastier! And less plastic in the area means less possibility of death due to that. No! Human absence is not negative.

South Africa is hit hard by the pandemic. Tourism industry has almost collapsed. In Mpumalanga, there lies an abandoned lodge. Abandoned by humans, that is. Vervet monkeys seize the opportunity and reserve the lodge. Full board, free-of-charge!

Not only them, but an entire wildlife ecosystem develops. There comes a guest disrupting their leisurely stay, a leopard! He starts to hunt even during the day. Survival of the fittest is occurring. He is the new owner of the lodge now. It's his kingdom. Nature rejuvenates!

At the very top of the wish list of anybody who visits Maasai Mara, Kenya, is to photograph a hunting cheetah. Being the fastest sprinter in the world, it can hunt. However, owing to its lean body, it's not the strongest among the predators. It has to somehow take the hunt to its cubs or call the cubs to the hunt. The hunt is too heavy, it can't be carried. He calls for his cubs, but in such a way that the predators are not hunted. It calls, but cubs cannot hear, because a lot of vehicles, walkie-talkies, voices, and all sorts of noises trump. Therefore, one out of three cubs survives in general. All of a sudden, the country is locked down. No vehicles, no walkie-talkies, no voices, and no noise. Cheetah calls the cubs; they respond in a flash. Cubs survive. Hence, doubtlessly more cheetahs in near future!

These are a few of the observations that nature lovers have made all across the globe. I look at my backyard, I see it and I feel it. Anybody will see the rejuvenation; we only have to watch. Post the industrial revolution; we have been exponentially disrupting the balance of the world, thinking that we are more powerful than nature itself. However, nature has given us an opportunity to pause and look back while it breathes.

Sustainability is such a hefty, bombastic word to understand. Thus, we don't try to.

I look out of my window. I can see empty roads, which are normally full of vehicular traffic. Between my window and the road, there is a papaya tree. There is a juicy fruit that we have forgotten to pluck. I have now been watching that fruit for a week now. I can see a number of birds that I haven't even seen in my lifetime and squirrels (and surely there should be ants too) have been consuming it for a week now. It would have been in our bellies in one meal had we not forgotten to pluck it.

I am not sure whether I should be embarrassed to learn what 'sustainability' is from those 'animals'.

Let me reiterate, 'Covid 19 Pandemic has its own merits'. Top of them for me is that it has given us a chance to pause and think.

Let us pause... Let nature breathe...

(Inspiration by the documentary 'The Year Earth Changed' produced by BBC Studios Natural History Unit Production)



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