

is focused on those species which are in danger of extermination. It makes little difference whether, from other points of view, they are attractive or repulsive, useful or useless, providing their numbers are few and becoming fewer. The increasingly rare rhinoceros and gorilla, for example, that are so disliked by children, become the centre of attention at this stage. They have to be 'saved'. The symbolic equation involved here is obvious enough: the senile individual is about to become personally extinct and so employs rare animals as symbols of his own impending doom. His emotional concern to save them from extinction reflects his desire to extend his own survival.

During recent years, interest in animal conservation has spread to some extent into the lower age groups, apparently as a result of the development of immensely powerful nuclear weapons. Their huge destructive potential threatens all of us, regardless of age, with the possibility of immediate extermination, so that now we all have an emotional need for animals that can serve as rarity symbols.

This observation should not be interpreted as implying that this is the only reason for the conservation of wild life. There are, in addition, perfectly valid scientific and aesthetic reasons why we should wish to give aid to unsuccessful species. If we are to continue to enjoy the rich complexities of the animal world and to use wild animals as objects of scientific and aesthetic exploration, we must give them a helping hand. If we allow them to vanish, we shall have simplified our environment in a most unfortunate way. Being an intensely investigatory species, we can ill afford to lose such a valuable source of material.

Economic factors are also sometimes mentioned when conservation problems are under discussion. It is pointed out that intelligent protection and controlled cropping of wild species can assist the protein-starved populations in certain parts of the world. While this is perfectly true on a short-term basis, the long-term picture is more gloomy. If our numbers continue to increase at the present frightening rate, it will eventually become a matter of choosing between us and them. No matter how valuable they are to us