



7,700 MILLION AND RISING

Loro Parque clocks world population figures

The Loro Parque Foundation recently released a dire warning regarding the rise in human population – as numbers soar through the historical figure of 7.7 billion.

The 'world population clock' is an ongoing tally of the planet's human inhabitants, based on United Nations' estimates. In just one hundred years, the number of people on the planet has increased by around 5,700 million, from the previous population of 2,000 million. Everything being equal, by 2023 the world's population is expected to rise to eight billion, and in another short 27 years, by 2050, to ten billion. Yet, as the Foundation's representatives point out, as our numbers grow, figures for wildlife populations continue to decline at a terrifying rate. For instance, it's estimated that there were over 29 million elephants in Africa before the arrival of the first Europeans. However, according to a study by the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) in 2012, from 1935 onwards the elephant population was decimated, falling from 10 million to less than 450,000 specimens. The same is also true of the blue whales in Antarctica, whose

population has fallen from 340,000 to just over 1,000 in less than a century. Fortunately, thanks to international conservation projects, the population of this species is slowly recovering. In contrast, some cetaceans, such as Mexican porpoises, have not had such luck. With fewer than 30 left, they are facing rapid extinction. According to the IUCN, up to 27 per cent of all species are currently under threat.

Overflowing cities

With around 4.5 billion inhabitants and an average population density of 144 people per square kilometre, Asia is the most populous continent on the planet. This is followed by Africa with about 1.3 billion and an average density of 43, and Europe with approximately 742 million inhabitants and 33 per square kilometre. However, just as local populations are not equally spread across continents, the overall impact that each region has also differs. For instance, Europe and Northern America may have comparatively low population densities, but their highly-developed infrastructure networks and importation and

agricultural practices lead to natural habitats being fragmented and reduced in other parts of the world as well, not just their own.

In addition, the United Nations estimates that up to 57 per cent of the world's population is presently living in cities, often with very little, or no, direct contact with nature and wildlife. By 2050, this proportion is expected to rise to at least 80 per cent, with humans moving ever further from the ability to connect with and understand nature.

Caring for the future

Current challenges are precisely why wildlife protection centres such as Loro Parque will play an increasingly important role in the future. Their mission is to continue working for the conservation of endangered species, to contribute to obtaining greater scientific knowledge in order to better protect animals, and to awaken visitors' love for all creatures, as well as their willingness to protect them. In a world that is more and more populated and urbanised, many zoos nowadays see themselves as ambassadors for animals and nature.



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