

A PLEA FROM THE DEEP

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[Assignment: Write an essay in which you take a clear position on some controversial issue or give some insight into an unfamiliar issue. Pay particular attention to the strategies of description, example, process, cause and effect. Try for a conclusion that will stick in your reader's mind.]

(1) "Save the whales" the morning newspaper headlines read. "Save the whales" glows the florescent bumper sticker on the back of the station wagon. "Save the Whales" shout the demonstrators that gather in public places. Saving the whales is an important goal that needs much attention. But I ask you, empathetic reader, are whales the only creatures that need protection? What about numerous other animals that are on the endangered species list? Some of the whales' neighbors that share the same oceans are in even greater jeopardy than the whale. The sea turtles, for instance, are not only faced with a number of predators that devour them as young, but also with humans who continues to chip away at their populations at a rate that could mean total extinction for some species as soon as the year 2000.

(2) In most cases, people do not deliberately slaughter the sea turtle. For instance, the fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico depend on their catch of fish to insure their survival, but their nets just so happen to entangle and trap the turtles underwater. Sea turtles can hold their breath for hours at a time but they do not have gills like fish; therefore, after several hours the victim drowns. By the time the fishermen draw in their nets at the end of the day there is nothing left to do for the turtle.

(3) The United States, in alliance with several Central American countries, has created laws that require fishermen to equip their nets with a trap door, a new installation that would allow sea turtles to escape unharmed. But the attempt has not been very successful since the new nets are extremely costly in comparison to the regular fishing nets. Fishermen, refusing to spend large amounts of their earnings to save a few sea turtles, have even revolted against the Coast Guard in several small scuffles. At present the law still stands, but its enforcement is lenient.

(4) Not only does humans unintentionally harm the turtles in the sea but also while they go about their business on land. Believe it or not, even the American farmer does devastating harm to the sea turtle population. Many farmers, unaware of their actions, do not understand how their corn field in Iowa can affect the Leatherback turtle that swims along the coast of Florida. The main problem stems from the herbicides and pesticides sprayed on the crops that wash into the ocean via the river systems. Hazardous to the adults, the chemicals are even more so to the young as they weaken the turtle's eggshell. If the shell is weak, the egg will not survive the required two month gestation period. Even though most clutches consist of at least 100 eggs, most eggs, as many as 90%, do not hatch when the mother has ingested the chemical. The 10% that do

survive are often too weak to survive the 20 year period before they reach maturity.

(5) Even the uncontaminated nests face destruction. Unlike the fisherman and the farmer, the poacher also destroys the turtle, but intentionally. The Green turtle, for instance, is very vulnerable to human predators since its nesting grounds are well known and unchanging. Its products--gourmet meat, flipper leather, cosmetic and cooking oils, and "turtle soup" calipee--are in demand world wide. As a consequence, the species is rapidly vanishing. Nor is the Green turtle the only species that faces annihilation; the story is basically the same for all sea turtles. Hunters have decimated their population to a critical level. Not even one species of sea turtle has a plentiful population.

(6) Often the people who try to help do as much harm as the poacher. As the turtles hatch they break for the surf like little storm troopers looking for cover from the birds that try to make them into hors d'oeuvres. Dusk is the best time for this to occur because fewer birds are out. The nest sends one turtle at a time at first, and if that one makes it the rest swarm out, flipping and flopping down the beach. On occasion people will see the little turtle who has been sent as a decoy and will try to help by attempting to save it from predators. But as the people scurry out to scare away the swooping birds, their commotion sends a false signal to the nest. A false signal may keep the turtles from coming out at dusk and may bring a mob of turtles out into the daylight instead of at dusk. When that happens, most are devoured by the thousands of hungry birds looking for a tasty morsel.

(7) Whether intentionally or unintentionally, humans slaughter a great many turtles each year, devastating the sea turtle population. New laws are greatly needed to protect the turtles from poaching and pollution, while the already existing laws need to be strictly enforced. Saving the whales is an important feat that deserves much attention, but from now on there needs to be a reorienting of our concerns. In our efforts to save the giant creatures we are forgetting about the small ones. The whale is not the only creature in the ocean, only the most romantic because of its size. The bumper sticker on the back of the beat-up old station wagon should now read, "Save the whales and the sea turtles!"