

NATURE ENVIRONMENT

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The Barren Sea

By the year 2030 more than one and a half million species of plants and animals will have disappeared – on all the continents and in all the oceans. But it is no easy task to stop plundering nature. Consider fishing, for example: Billions of people depend on the fishing industry for their livelihood. An estimated quarter of all fish species have been decimated, seven per cent have become extinct, and many more are in grave danger. Nonetheless, subsidized industrial fishing fleets continue to scour the oceans. Other dangers to fish include pollution, huge drift nets, and alien organisms brought from distant parts as more and more freighters criss-cross the globe.

01 Overfishing – Bye-bye, Cod

The cod, one of the most important of all edible fish, is threatened with extinction. Yet EU authorities still cannot reach agreement on catch quotas. The attempt to set up protection zones has failed. Conservationists are finding it hard to come up with campaigns aimed at protecting the cod, which is not as popular as the whale or the dolphin.

02 Ghost Nets – Deadly Traps in the Ocean

On each fishing trip a trawler will cast up to a thousand nets. When storms make it impossible to haul them in, or if the crew fails to find them again, these nets become lethal traps for fish and other marine creatures. Lost nets that sink to great depths cause major damage, because some species that inhabit such zones have already decreased in number by over ninety per cent.

03 Fighting Pirate Fishing in the Arctic Ocean

Pirate fishermen simply ignore catch quotas and laws. They satisfy the demand for cheap fish, which finds its way into supermarkets by illicit means. Every year pirate fishing-boats land North Atlantic cod worth around two hundred million euros. To combat illegal fishing, Norwegian coastguard vessels are now monitoring the high seas.

04 Aquafarming – Profit or Conservation in Chile

The waters off southern Chile are frequented by large numbers of blue whales. But, with the world's biggest mammal now in danger of extinction, whale researchers are calling for a marine protection zone to be set up. The aim is also to combat environmental damage, because there is scarcely a bay in the region that does not have a salmon farm. Fish and plants in the vicinity of salmon farms are dying. People are also threatened, because intensive salmon farming involves the use of large quantities of medicinal drugs and chemicals.

05 Dolphin Hunting – Cheap Meat for Peru's Poor

Despite a moratorium, some 20,000 dolphins are killed off Peru's coast every year. Some for food, others for bait. The fishermen say they need the extra income. Now 'Mundo Azul', an environment group, wants to show the fishermen how they can make more money with living dolphins.

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06 Water Pollution – Greece's Sponges Face Extinction

For centuries sponges formed the main source of income for people on the Greek island of Kalymnos. Diving for sponges was a dangerous and often fatal occupation – but there was good money to be made. However, sponges have been almost wiped out by water pollution and disease. Sponge beds take a long time to recover. At the same time, demand for natural sponges is increasing.

07 Reef Protection – Gentle Dive Tourism on the Red Sea

The Red Sea is a paradise for divers. But tourism has its price: huge hotel complexes right next to the reef, environmental pollution, and reef damage caused by untrained divers. At his eco-lodge 'Marsa Shagra' near the famous Elphinstone reef, Hossam Helmy hopes to show that this does not have to be the case. The divers who come here abide strictly by the rules of gentle dive tourism.