

Impact of Wars on Biodiversity in Sudan

Sudan is one of the most biodiverse countries in Africa, with ecosystems ranging from deserts to savannahs, forests, and coastal areas. However, the wars and conflicts that have occurred in Sudan, especially in recent decades, have significantly impacted this biodiversity, leading to substantial species loss and degradation of natural habitats.

First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972)

The first civil war began in 1955 and lasted until 1972. Although it was primarily concentrated in South Sudan, it had significant impacts on local ecosystems. Biodiverse areas such as wet savannah forests and swamps were heavily affected by the conflict. Elephant populations, which were once abundant in South Sudan, saw a sharp decline due to increased poaching associated with the chaos of war.

Environmental Impacts

Habitat Loss: Due to displacement and military movements
Decline in Elephant Populations: Decreased by Approximately 30% in affected areas.

Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005)

The second civil war was longer and more destructive, lasting over two decades. It severely impacted South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and surrounding regions. Deforestation was rampant as trees were cut for fuel and to expand agricultural lands, often at the expense of forests.

Environmental Impacts

Deforestation: About 1.5 million hectares of forests were destroyed ,
Loss of Wildlife: Large mammals such as buffalo and antelope declined by 40-60%

Darfur Conflict (2003-Present)

The Darfur conflict began in 2003 and continues intermittently. It has had a severe impact on biodiversity in the region, which includes mountainous areas and fertile plains. The war led to the displacement of millions, putting immense pressure on natural resources, including wildlife and rare plant species

Environmental Impacts

Degradation of Natural Habitats: Large-scale destruction of land due to displacement

Loss of Plant Diversity: Over 25% of plant species in Darfur are threatened with extinction

Increased Poaching: Significant decline in wildlife populations, including ostriches and giraffe

Conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile (2011-Present)

The conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile began after the secession of South Sudan in 2011. These areas are known for their rich biodiversity, including the Nuba Mountains and tropical forests that host rare plant and animal species. The conflict led to widespread habitat destruction and a surge in poaching.

Environmental Impacts

Forest Degradation: Deforestation increased by about 25% Decline in Wildlife Populations: Some species, such as antelope, declined by up to 50%.

South Sudan Civil War (2013-2018)

The civil war in South Sudan, which began two years after its independence from Sudan, caused widespread destruction of natural habitats in the new country. South Sudan is home to some of the richest ecosystems in Africa, such as the Sudd Wetlands and southern savannahs. The conflict led to massive displacement and increased pressure on natural resources

Environmental Impacts

Loss of Wetlands: The Sudd Wetlands shrank by 30% ,Wildlife Degradation: Large mammals like the kudu and buffalo declined by 20-40%

Current Conflict in Sudan (2023-Present)

The ongoing conflict that began in April 2023 has significantly affected biodiversity in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile regions. The conflict has led to increased internal displacement, adding further strain on natural environments

Environmental Impacts

Destruction of Nature Reserves: Some reserves have been nearly completely destroyed , Increased Poaching: Significant reductions in endangered species like cheetahs and elephants Forest Degradation: Ongoing deforestation at an estimated rate of 2% annually in conflict zones.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The continuous wars in Sudan over the past decades have caused massive destruction to the country's biodiversity. Habitat loss, deforestation, and poaching are some of the main challenges. To effectively restore natural environments and conserve biodiversity, Sudan needs to achieve peace

and stability, strengthen the protection of nature reserves, and enforce strict laws against poaching and deforestation

Sources:

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Reports from formerly the Sudanese Ministry of Environment

