Threats Of Pythons In The Everglades

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Burmese Pythons and Ecological Threats in the Everglades

Burmese pythons have been a great danger to Everglades National Park, which is located in south Florida. The exotic snakes are native to South Asia. They entered the United States, where some of the inhabitants bought them as pets and took care of them in their homes. According to Cubie (2009), these snakes were abandoned by their owners, after which they found their way into the Everglades. Due to the favorable conditions around Everglades National Park, these types of snakes have prolifically multiplied in South Florida.

It's approximated that tens to hundreds of thousands of snakes have invaded the park (Cubie, 2009). As a result of their large numbers, they have caused a lot of effects on the tourist attraction site. Some of the major challenges caused by these non-native species that I am going to discuss below include endangering the native species, damage to the ecosystem, and hindrance to the renovation of the park. Also, in the last part of this research, I am to discuss the measures put in place to curb the spread of these snakes.

One of the major challenges caused by these snakes is endangering the native species. The Everglades National Park is home to many animals and birds, such as marsh rabbits, opossums, raccoons, fish, alligators, foxes, deer, rats, and many more mammals (Reed, 2005). According to Willson et al. (2010), around early in the year 2000, most of the animals would always be observed during the night and daytime. Immediately after the spread of these deadly species, the number of these animals fell drastically around the park. No more birds and reptiles would be seen on a regular basis.

The availability of many native species at that time as a source of food for pythons led the python population to increase rapidly in the park (McCleery et al., 2015). It's believed that pythons eat almost 75 percent of the animals that they come across within the park, and therefore, almost all the animals in the park are not spared by these snakes, putting them at risk. Sources say that pythons can live for an average of thirty years in the park (Reed, 2005). Their long lifespan in the wild allows them to feed on more of these species, causing them to become extinct as their reproduction rate is low.

Predation, Reproduction, and Damage to Native Species

For instance, research that was carried out over a five-year period showed that about 85 snakes in number had eaten approximately 25 birds belonging to various species in the park. Most of the birds that were eaten by these alien snakes were naïve. They would land on the big body of these snakes, after which they would be trapped and swallowed alive by the pythons. Though plans are underway to prevent more of these birds from being consumed, they are small in nature, and the high rate of consumption from these predators poses a great challenge to rescue them (Hart et al., 2015).

Another effect caused by “Burmese Pythons” is the destruction of the environment as a result of their high rate of reproduction (Reed, 2005). The occasional crocodiles/alligators are becoming more endangered as they compete with them for food. All these types of animals consume any mammals they find along their way and choose what to eat according to body size. If a snake is smaller than the crocodile, it will be consumed, and if the alligator is small, it will be preyed on by the snake.

Alligators are important as they are crucial in maintaining the environment in which they harbor. Alligators build holes that are filled with water mostly during the rainy season and conserved during the dry season. Most of the animals move to these holes in search of food and settle there due to high temperatures. Alligators use these holes to hunt for their prey. According to Mazzotti et al. (2009), if the population of Burmese pythons surpasses that of the alligators by constantly feeding on them, other wild mammals that depend on these places for food and shelter during the dry season are endangered.

Control Strategies and the Restoration of the Everglades

To curb the spread of these snakes in Everglades, billions of dollars are set aside to terminate their existence and restore the park to its original state. Several measures have been put in place to halt their spread. Various agencies such as “Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission” have helped to capture thousands of pythons from the park, but still, there are many left since there are a hundred thousand of them.

Another method that has been used is the capture method by local inhabitants. Individuals are urged to hunt the snakes, and anybody who traps any is rewarded. Though people are able to capture some snakes, some risks exist as they can bite them, causing great fear for those involved in the challenge (Mazzotti et al., 2009). Snake traps have also been placed to trap them by putting rats inside to attract them to prey on them; in the process, they are trapped. Finally, various scientists have used various chemical and biological drugs to capture a very large number of snakes, even though they

can be hazardous to some of the endangered species they are trying to protect (Mazzotti et al., 2009).

In conclusion, the Burmese Pythons will survive in any place in the United States of America, as studies show they can dwell in both fresh and salt water (McCleery et al., 2015). Due to this adaptability, they would multiply in all conditions, increasing their numbers. The authorities from all these places will have to take serious measures to stop their spread; otherwise, they will still increase in number, endangering the native species.

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