

2023 年“中译国青杯”国际组织文件翻译大赛

学生组——英译汉【原文】

I recently visited a museum exhibit on big cats. A sign featuring a beautiful jaguar asked, “Why should we care about wild cats?” Its answer: “Because in protecting big cats, we are protecting ourselves.”

Is that really true? That implies big cats are in trouble because “we” don’t care to protect ourselves. And if it turns out that we don’t really need jaguars in order to protect ourselves, have they lost their case for existence?

For decades, many conservationists have been trying to sell a clumsy, fumbling appeal to self-interest: the idea that human beings need wild nature, need wild animals, need the species on endangered lists. “If they go extinct, we’ll go extinct,” is a common refrain. The only problem: it’s false.

We drove the most abundant bird in the Americas — the passenger pigeon — to extinction. The most abundant large mammal — the American bison — to functional extinction. We gained: agriculture, and safety for cows, from sea to shining sea. Who misses the Eskimo curlew? Indeed, who knows they existed, their vast migrating flocks like smoke on the now-gone prairies? That experiment is done.

Billions of people want what you and I got in exchange: health and wealth and education. We now live the way most other people on the planet wish to live. Governments, institutions, and regular people have cheered the material expansion that has cost many species (and tribal peoples) everything. We have endangered species not because what is bad for them is bad for us, but because the opposite is true: what is bad for them has fueled the explosive growth and maintenance of human populations and technologies. We are losing many species along the way to humanity’s only three apparent real goals: bigger, faster, more. Propelling the human juggernaut has entailed wiping many species out of the way. People live at high densities in places devoid of

wild species and natural beauty. Human beings have thrived by destroying nature. When the animals and open spaces go, we have industrial-scale farms and factories, ball fields and strip malls and quick-lubes. How could saving this or that endangered species, that is following those whose oblivion brought fast food and sneakers, be a matter of — of all things — saving ourselves? Telling people that “we” need jaguars to “protect ourselves?” That’s a hard sell. We don’t need them.

I can’t name a single wild species whose total disappearance would be materially felt by, essentially, anyone. There is no species whose disappearance has posed much of an inconvenience for civilization, not a single wild species that people couldn’t do without, fewer whose erasure would be noticed by any but a handful of die-hard conservationists or scientists. The irrelevance of wild things to civil society is why endangered species never make it into polls of top public priorities. I can’t name one wild species whose total disappearance would be materially felt by, essentially, anyone (you can easily function without having access to elephants, but if you misplace your phone for one whole day, it’s personal chaos). But I can effortlessly list various species from tigers to mosquitoes whose annihilation has been diligently pursued. Annihilation comes easy to *Homo sapiens*. What’s of little interest for us is coexistence.

I have seen with my own eyes that the role of elephants as ecosystem engineers affecting all animals on the African savannas matters not at all to people converting bushland into vulnerable subsistence gardens or, more decisively, into large commercial farms raising flowers destined for vases on the tables of Europe. Think of your favorite species. Gorillas? Sperm whales? Hyacinth macaws? Karner blue butterflies? Billions of people never give them a thought.

Only a tiny minority of people actually work with wild creatures, as ecologists, conservation biologists, wildlife rehabilitators, falconers, or even fishermen (oddly and not coincidentally I’ve been all of those.) On an average day, animals and plants must put up or be pushed out. In most countries, few wild things can “provide” to humans anything more valued than their carcasses. Many major American tree species have disappeared or nearly so (American elm, American chestnut, eastern hemlock, for

instance). Ash trees are now disappearing and the main pain-point for humanity is nothing more than angst for the future of baseball bats.

It is of course true that the things that are bad for nature as a whole — degradation of land and soil, polluted water and air — are bad for people ultimately. A total breakdown of living systems would mean a breakdown of human economies, and indications are it likely will. But “ultimately” is very far down the line, long after we’ve lost all the big animals, wild lands, viable ocean habitats, and the world’s living beauty. The human juggernaut can continue to blow through rhinos, parrots, elephants, lions, and apes and hardly feel a breeze. The most charismatic species all stand at or near historic lows and humans are at our historic high, two facts that are sides of the same coin. Claiming that people depend on wild nature is nice, but dependence on wild nature ended, and not well, generations ago. What keeps most people going is farming, felling, pumping, and mining.

Far down the line when the land is exhausted and there’s no water on an overheated planet, there may be a great reckoning. It’s easy enough to hear the rumbles now. But even the recent hurricanes and fires that have left communities seemingly beyond recovery have not shaken the deniers. In this country, government disdain for natural places and species, and official ennui about the human health effects of environmental degradation, are worst-ever. And the current rollbacks remain too weakly opposed; most people don’t feel affected. Most of wild nature could be gone long before the human species confronts an existential cliff.

【参赛译文格式要求】

- 一、 参赛译文应为 Word 文档.doc 或.docx 格式。
- 二、 译文字体：宋体（中文）/Times New Roman（英文），黑色，小四号，1.5 倍行距，两端对齐，并按照原文段落设置，对译文进行同样分段。
- 三、 参赛译文文件命名格式：参赛组别+参赛项目+真实姓名，例如：学生组 英译汉 姓名

- 四、译文正文内请勿添加姓名、地址、脚注、尾注等任何个人信息，否则将视为无效译文。
- 五、“参赛译文”和“参赛报名表”两份文件务必以一个.zip 或.rar 压缩包形式同时上传，压缩包命名格式示例：学生组 英译汉 姓名。
- 六、大赛不支持修改译文和重复上传功能，每名参赛者只能提交一次译文，请谨慎对待；如需再次提交译文，需重新报名，成绩按最高分参评。
- 七、请务必于大赛组委会发布的截稿时间前上传“参赛译文”和“参赛报名表”压缩包。



中译国青杯

CTC YOUTH CUP