



Ecotourism Hurts Environment

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Ecotourism is a booming business that many tour operators cite as being helpful to nature. Every year, millions of people descend on protected and pristine natural areas to observe rare species. However, a new report casts doubt on the value of this form of tourism. In fact, it suggests that ecotourism is more damaging than helpful to nature. Details are in a report published in the journal 'Trends in Ecology and Evolution'. Researchers believe tourists are disrupting animals in their natural habitat. They pointed to a recent event where sea turtles in Costa Rica had problems laying their eggs because of the hordes of tourists who had congregated to watch the turtles' nesting habits.

The report says that ecotourism is making animals bolder and that this could endanger the animals. A regular human presence might make animals tamer and less cautious about other animals around them, and this could put them at risk of being attacked by their natural threats. "Then they will suffer higher mortality when they encounter real predators," the report says. It added: "When animals interact in 'benign' ways with humans, they may let down their guard." The report said it was essential, "to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how different species in different situations respond to human visitation and under what precise conditions human exposure might put them at risk."

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