

The Ugly Truth

Endangered animals that aren't considered cute or cuddly are often overlooked. But scientists say these animals need our help too.



An endangered pangolin

Which animal would you rather snuggle up with—a panda cub or the purple pig-nosed frog at the bottom of the page? Most people would say the panda, but not Lucy Cooke.

"I've always loved weird, freaky, and strange animals," she says.

Cooke is a scientist who travels the globe to take photos and videos of the world's ugliest animals. She has also hosted TV specials to raise awareness about

these creatures before it's too late. Many are endangered and could use a helping hand.

Animal Planet

There are more than 11,000 known endangered animal species in the world. You likely know that tigers, giant pandas, and some types of penguins are among the animals in danger of dying out. Animals like those get most of the attention from conservation groups. A study

released last year by Canadian scientist Ernie Small shows that this is no accident. He found that animal-protection groups tend to focus on cute and cuddly creatures because it's easy to convince people to help them.

Who You Calling Ugly?

Most endangered animals aren't adorable, however. Just look at the striped hyena, the proboscis monkey, and the blobfish. Scientists say they need

Striped Hyena

The state of the striped hyena is no laughing matter. Only about 10,000 of them still roam areas from North Africa to India. Striped hyenas are often killed by farmers who want to protect their crops and livestock. The hyena's front legs are much longer than its hind legs, so it appears to be limping when it walks.



The purple pig-nosed frog lives in India.



our help too. Every animal, no matter how it looks, plays an important role in an ecosystem.

Take frogs, for example. Sure, they're slimy. But Cooke explains that if they were to disappear from an ecosystem, the snakes and birds that feed on them could end up dying out too. At the same time, with no frogs to gobble them up, the number of mosquitoes and flies might grow out of control.

"We need to protect all of nature and not just the fluffy bits," Cooke says. "All animals have a job to do."

It's Not All About Looks

Cooke says there's a good reason all animals aren't cute and fuzzy. Often the things we find unattractive in animals are **adaptations** that help them survive in the wild.

She points to one of her favorite endangered animals, the pangolin, as an example. The small mammal lives in Africa and Asia. Cooke calls it a "walking pinecone" because it's covered from head to tail with large, hard scales. But the pangolin's ugly body armor protects it from tigers and other predators.

Cooke is working to educate people about the importance of keeping pangolins and other ugly



Proboscis Monkey

Check out the honker on this guy! Proboscis monkeys use their 4-inch-long noses to produce a loud sound that attracts mates and scares off enemies. But the destruction of the monkeys' forest homes on the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia, is driving them toward extinction.



Words to Know

conservation (kon-ser-VAY-shun) *noun*, the protection of valuable things, especially forests, wildlife, and natural resources

adaptations (a-dap-TAY-shuns) *noun, plural*, characteristics that help an animal or a plant survive in its environment

animals around. She wants people to appreciate *all* animals, no matter what they look like.

"Once you understand why they're ugly or odd," she says, "I hope you'll appreciate and want to save them as much as I do."

—by Joe Bubar

Blobfish

It's easy to see how this sea creature got its name. Blobfish live in the deep ocean near Australia. The fish's blobby body lets it float just above the seafloor, so it doesn't have to use a lot of energy chasing its next meal.

Instead, it hovers and waits to gobble up any prey that pass by. Unfortunately, blobfish often get caught in the nets of fishermen looking for crabs and lobsters.

