

Tessa Blevins

English

Mr. Pults

November 7, 2023

### One Small Step

"Progress is not necessarily taking that first step; all it takes is just facing forward." It's hard to believe that the biggest salamander in North America is endangered and soon to be extinct. So many factors have "contributed" to this horrifying occurrence and almost no one has done anything about it. The Hellbenders survival depends on healthy waters, but in the world we live in today, you can almost know that the plastic is there, even without seeing it. Besides their size, Hellbenders don't bother anyone. In fact, most of the time you don't even know they're there because they hide under rocks and their underbelly provides a good disguise. At first glance you wouldn't even know they are there. Another factor is that maybe some people see them and think that it's okay to try and catch them or maybe bring them home. Not just the Hellbenders want privacy: this has to do with literally every single animal in the wildlife. We humans invaded the Salamanders' space and thought that it's fine to just leave trash all over its ecosystem and, due to their poor eyesight, they might run into the trash and suffocate.

Even though scientists are trying to make them flourish and have more in numbers, we haven't made much success. The eggs take about three to four years to develop and withstand the change of environment from the lab to the streams and creeks. I feel like kids and even adults don't understand that the smallest of things, for instance picking up a piece of trash you see, can change animals' lives. One small act of kindness can save lives with animals and people. It's sad to imagine that people do this to the world and just don't care. God gave us this world to share in

his abundant love in everything, but we've just taken that and tossed it aside. The least we could do is try to get ourselves together and take care of the world because our world could and kind of has gone downhill.

The Eastern Hellbender is just one of the many animals suffering from our mistakes, or even things we do on purpose. The fact that nature has been so good to us, yet we have the audacity to endanger species. Though, endangered species do still die from natural causes, other animals, or harmful environments. Animals need to be treated with kindness; even if they are cute or not, or social or not, they can go live their lives amazingly without having to worry about their endangerment. This salamander is part of our surroundings and it's just as special as we are. There is no reason whatsoever why they should be endangered.

Our wildlife needs to be preserved and helped so that our world can be a better place. Without our wildlife, without our trees and plants, just think of how different Earth would be. Even if one species goes extinct, it can change everything. Like spiders, for instance, they can be scary and venomous, but they help catch flies and eat pests. Even if you don't see different animals, that doesn't mean they aren't there. Just Like the Eastern Hellbender, it's secretive and you don't really see them, but they are there. Their presence indicates good water quality. Just being there has probably saved dozens of lives. Someone was probably in need of water, and they noticed a Hellbender is living there, they might know that the water quality is good if it lives there. As one can see, ensuring that animals thrive and aren't endangered is a key factor in making a difference on this planet.