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Silent Victims of the Deep: Marine Life under Siege and the Imperative of Green Victimology

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Abstract

Marine life, a bedrock of ecological balance, faces a worsening catastrophe driven by human-induced ecological degradation, yet it remains underreported and underestimated within conventional legal and victimology paradigms. Various anthropogenic activities, ranging from habitat destruction and overexploitation of marine resources to pollution and acoustic disturbances, have put an overwhelming strain on marine ecosystems, pushing numerous species toward extinction. The framework of green victimology, which identifies non-human entities as victims of environmental crime, provides a vital perspective to evaluate marine life victimization. This paper explores the persistent challenges endured by marine species, accentuating their role as silent victims of ecological injustice. Through various case studies, namely whale hunting, shark finning, and bycatch mortality, the research brings to the fore both the successes and failures of existing legal frameworks in safeguarding marine life. The paper further advocates for a paradigm shift in policymaking that transcends anthropocentrism and encourages an ecocentric approach to marine ecosystem preservation. Identifying marine species as rightful victims within green victimology fortifies not only ecological justice but also fosters sustainable ecological synergy between humanity and ocean life. This paper signals the pressing requirement for stronger international regulatory mechanisms and a reimagined jurisprudential outlook that affords marine species the required protections it urgently needs.

Keywords: *Ecological Justice; Environmental Crime; Green Victimology; Marine Conservation; Policy Reform*

1.0 Introduction

The oceans represent an entirely distinct realm teeming with remarkable beauty, colour, and life. Beneath the waves lies a habitat for an astonishing array of wildlife. The oceans, covering 70% of the Earth's surface play an essential role in sustaining life on our planet, contributing to over 50% of the oxygen in the atmosphere (*The Ocean – the World's Greatest Ally Against Climate Change*, n.d.). The oceans are facing a dire crisis, marked by the diminution of marine species, the devastation of coral reefs, and extensive plastic contamination (Thushari & Senevirathna, 2020). These ecosystems, which are fundamental for the ecological balance of the planet, are being systematically degraded by activities such as overfishing, cetacean hunting, bycatch, habitat destruction, and the effects of climate change (Luypaert, Hagan, McCarthy, & Poti, 2020). Disturbing headlines frequently emerge, including "Blood Sport or Humane and Quick Controversial Whale Slaughter Begins in Faroe Islands" (Askew, 2024); "40-kg Plastic Found in Dead Whale's Belly" ("40-kg Plastic Found in Dead Whale's Belly," 2019); "Peru Seizes 1.3 Tons of Shark Fins" (Lima, 2024); "South Africa Police Arrest 3 for Abalone Poaching"(France Presse, 2024), and such headlines persist with alarming frequency, starkly illustrating the profound consequences of human actions and neglect on marine life. These situations exemplify series of environmental crimes with profound ecological, legal, and ethical implications, constituting an insidious threat to the marine environments for centuries. Unfortunately, society and the legal system have always

adopted a predominantly human-centric approach when addressing these issues, frequently neglecting the silent victims- the marine animals (White, 2018).

In the conventional victimological literature, the individuals, communities, the wildlife and the ecosystem affected by the environmentally harmful activities have been largely overlooked. Within the domain of criminology and victimology, a key debate has arisen whether those impacted by environmental devastation can be regarded as true victims of crime, particularly when numerous environmentally harmful practices are sanctioned and promoted by state authorities. The society with its implicit consent has often allowed various environmental disruptions to occur legitimately. It has been a herculean task to determine what constitutes an environmental transgression, weighing the economic benefits for communities, including employment opportunities and income development against the urgent need for ecological preservation, biodiversity maintenance, and fostering long-term environmental sustainability. Since time immemorial, nations around the globe have prioritised economic development over environment preservation, effectively understood through the concept of "treadmill of production" (Hall, 2013). This decision of prioritising economic interests is influenced by power inequalities, where individuals holding significant economic and political power can construct policies to favour their ego centric agenda even at the expense of the environment and the lives dwelling there. The dominant and influential entities contributing significantly to environmental disruptions often resist regulations that could constrain their operations. It has been argued by the elite figures, that enforcing environmental laws on them would weaken economic development, and by extension, the collective well-being (Hall, 2013).

Beyond the existing threats of climate change and pollution, marine ecosystems are now contending with unprecedented pressures. The rapid expansion of offshore renewable energy projects, coupled with rising demands from recreational activities like tourism, boating, whale-watching, and leisure fishing has intensified the strain on these ecosystems. The marine ecosystems are further pushed to their limits due to the persistent mismanagement of fisheries due to overfishing and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing (Nurse, 2023). Most criminal jurisprudence worldwide are structured to address individual or small-scale crimes, but they struggle to effectively handle "mass victimizations" or atrocities—where large groups or entire ecosystems are distressed, as is frequently the case of environmental crimes (Hall, 2013). When we view the threats against marine ecosystem through the lens of green victimology, this concept becomes more critical. Crimes perpetrated against marine animals affect not only individual animals but entire species, food chains, and oceanic biodiversity. These mass victimizations give rise to widespread ecological harm, yet traditional justice systems is bereft of the frameworks to adequately address or prosecute such violations. When conventional victimology limits itself to an anthropocentric focus, the suffering of silent marine victims remains unacknowledged. This is where green victimology steps in, championing the recognition of these voiceless entities and ensuring they are granted rightful victim status. Green victimology, an emerging field within victimology, concentrates on the victims of environmental harm (White, 2018). One of the key challenges in achieving environmental justice lies in the prejudiced and self-constructed nature of victimhood definitions, giving rise to a persistent tension between human and non-human victims of environmental injustices.

The escalating harm to marine life reflects a pressing concern within the realm of green victimology. This paper explores the complex dimensions of marine life victimization which has a cascading effect on global biodiversity and human livelihoods through a green victimology lens. The paper will further delve into case studies and regulatory frameworks analyzing both the failures and successes in addressing marine life necessitating a paradigm shift in policy-making on ecological justice and sustainability.

2.0 Marine Life and Ecosystem Pressures

The oceans play a vital role in sustaining life on the earth, absorbing 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions, and capturing 90% of the excess heat generated by those emissions. Oceans for centuries have played a dual role, serving as the largest "carbon sink" and "lungs of the Blue Planet" (*The Ocean – the World's Greatest Ally Against Climate Change*, n.d.). However, unsustainable human activities like extensive burning of fossil fuels and alterations in land-use practices have

severely compromised the health of the oceans leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions that warm and acidify seawater. Climate change has unleashed what can be referred to as its "deadly trio" on marine biodiversity namely, ocean acidification, ocean warming, and marine dead zones. Marine animals stand as the invisible victims in the face of an escalating ecological crisis. The ocean, long perceived as an inexhaustible resource, is now a battleground where marine life is subjected to an array of anthropogenic pressures (Venegas, Acevedo, & Treml, 2023). Many of the marine creatures that occupy critical roles in marine ecosystems face a slow and torturous demise as a result of climate change, habitat destruction, and pollution—each fueled by the relentless pursuit of human convenience and economic gain.

One of the most insidious outcomes of unchecked carbon emissions, ocean acidification, reveals the extent of this suffering where oceans absorb excessive amounts of CO_2 from the atmosphere, leading to a decrease in pH levels and a subsequent reduction in carbonate ion concentration. Several species like corals, crustaceans, and mollusks, rely on calcium carbonate for their skeletal structures and are rendered defenseless. The acidification of seawater disrupts their ability to form and maintain shells, effectively stripping them of their natural armor. The consequences are stark: with corals experiencing diminished growth rates and increased mortality, mollusks struggling to survive in their vulnerable larval stages, and the collapse of these ecological linchpins sets off a chain reaction that reverberates throughout the entire marine food web. The dread of this situation is its invisibility and stealthy nature (Allemand & Osborn, 2019). Coral reefs, often termed the "rainforests of the sea" are not just vibrant ecosystems but also the lifeline for approximately a quarter of all species in the oceans (Banerjee, 2022). As these reefs succumb to acidification and bleaching, the countless species that depend on them for food and shelter are pushed toward extinction. The stratification of ocean waters, intensified by global warming inhibits the vertical mixing of oxygen-rich surface waters with deeper layers and thus results in the formation of hypoxic "dead zones" where oxygen levels are insufficient to sustain life, leading to widespread die-offs. Species unable to migrate to more hospitable environments often succumb to suffocation, effectively sealing their fate (Limburg *et al.,* 2020). These ecological crimes systematically perpetrate harm against marine life and sabotage the integrity of the marine ecosystems.

3.0 The Crippling Impact of Plastic and Noise Pollution on Marine Lives

Each year, over 430 million tonnes of plastic with approximately two-thirds constituting short-lived products that swiftly turn into waste, eventually polluting the seawater (United Nations Environment Programme, n.d.). Among various ecosystems, the ocean is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of plastic waste. Once plastic enters marine environments, it becomes a transboundary pollutant, carried by waves and storms to even the most remote oceanic regions (Hatzonikolakis *et al.,* 2022). This pollution accumulates in large gyres on the high seas or becomes entrenched in fragile coastal ecosystems. For instance, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is an ever-expanding accumulation of debris, consisting largely of non-biodegradable plastics that fragment into microplastics rather than decompose. The remote location of the Patch has led to a lack of accountability, as no single nation has claimed responsibility for its decontamination, leaving this environmental catastrophe mostly ignored (Lebreton *et al.,* 2018). Annually, more than 100,000 marine mammals are killed by plastic waste discarded into the seas, impacting species through entanglement, ingestion, and toxic contamination. The dumping of abandoned fishing gear like ghost nets, pots, and ropes made from durable plastic has ensnared and trapped a diverse range of marine life, from blue whales to smaller crustaceans (Mulhern, 2021). According to estimates, approximately 300,000 dolphins, whales, and porpoises succumb to ghost gear entanglement each year (Kate McCoy, 2024). Entanglement is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the dangers marine megafauna face from plastic contamination. In addition to being caught, these animals are also at high risk of ingesting plastic debris. One harrowing example from 2019 involved a whale that washed ashore in the Philippines with 40 kilograms of plastic bags found in its stomach (Borunda, 2019). Sea turtles frequently confuse plastic bags with jellyfish, a primary component of their diet, resulting in accidental ingestion that can lead to malnutrition or even starvation (Santos *et al.,* 2020). The study conducted by the University of Exeter and SPOT examined 135 turtles washed ashore or entangled in fishing nets off the northern Cyprus coast and called attention to the ingestion of large plastic pieces over 5mm in size (Morrison, 2024). Moreover, turtles

often become entangled in discarded fishing rings and gears, which pose severe risks of injury or fatality, further compromising with their survival (Duncan *et al.,* 2017).

Another emerging planetary crisis is the rise of noise pollution. Fishes and other marine animals like whales and dolphins rely heavily on sound for vital life processes, including breeding, sustenance, predator avoidance, and locomotion. However, the ocean has been increasingly inundated with noise due to human activities such as commercial shipping, energy exploration, and sonar-based military operations. This unwanted noise pollution can have far-reaching and devastating effects on marine ecosystems. Noise can permeate vast expanses of the ocean, disrupting the ability of marine species to sustain (Harding & Cousins, 2022). Pilot whales, for instance, are particularly vulnerable to underwater noise pollution in areas like the North Sea, where intense fishing and oil drilling activities generate considerable sound. Their strong social bonds and herd mentality make them susceptible to mass disorientation and panic, often leading to tragic beaching incidents (Arranz *et al.,* 2024). In extreme cases, seismic air guns used in oil exploration emit sound waves so powerful that they can inflict permanent hearing loss, internal tissue damage, and even death in nearby marine animals. Similarly, in the regions of East Asia, Europe, and Caribbean, the utilization of naval sonar has been linked to numerous mass stranding events involving whales, where entire pods of these animals beach themselves in response to overwhelming noise stimuli (Underwater Noise Is a Threat to Marine Life, 2023).

These marine animals become the involuntary victims of human actions, whose lives depend on sound for survival, and are forced to contend with an acoustic landscape increasingly dominated by human-generated noise. This environmental assault renders them disoriented, vulnerable, and unable to perform critical life functions, often resulting in trauma or loss of life. The victims of these unwarranted disturbances are often caught in a tragic confluence of natural instinct and human interference.

4.0 Bottom Trawling and Habitat Destruction

The practice of bottom trawling presents another significant danger lurking in the ocean, that accounts for more than a quarter of the global fish catch, making it the most dominant fishing method in use today (Gianni, 2004). This practice targets a wide range of species, both for human consumption and for producing animal feed. However, bottom trawling and dredging are associated with three major environmental concerns namely overfishing of target species, bycatch, and significant damage to seabed habitats. The issue of bycatch is more pronounced, particularly shrimp trawling, can be exceedingly indiscriminate, with some catches consisting of up to 90% non-target species (Steadman, 2021). This method presents a significant threat to the biodiversity of deep-sea ecosystems, especially fragile habitats like coral reefs and seamounts. Research has documented losses of up to 98% of coral cover in these areas due to bottom trawling. The lack of regulations governing most high-seas bottom trawl fisheries further exacerbates the situation (Gianni, 2004). The underreporting and misreporting of high-seas bottom trawl catches, combined with the rampant issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, make accurate assessments of these fisheries even more difficult. The overall food web including the predator-prey dynamics is disrupted by this unsustainable method, leaving behind an altered habitats and ecosystems (Widjaja *et al.,* 2019).

Another major concern is the destruction of the ocean floor, particularly in fragile sponges, benthic organisms and corals, known as the ecosystem engineers that shape the structure of deep-sea ecosystems. As bottom trawls scrape along the seafloor, they decimate these critical habitats, leading to long-term consequences for marine biodiversity. This method is especially damaging to deep-sea coral forests, which are among the most biodiverse and endemic ecosystems on Earth, taking centuries to form (Morrison *et al.,* 2020). According to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, bottom trawling can kill up to 90% of a coral colony and damage two-thirds of sponges in affected areas. This non-selective nature of trawling also disrupts the biochemical cycles of the ocean floor and increases the carbon footprint of fishing operations. As the trawl nets drag along the seafloor, they crush corals, seagrasses, and sponges—habitats that provide shelter, breeding grounds, and food for countless marine species (Oceana, 2022).

This environmental victimization epitomizes the silent devastation inflicted upon marine ecosystems. This victimization is fueled by impulsive human actions driven

by economic gain, disregarding long-term environmental consequences. Human activities like bottom trawling are often rooted in short-term profit motivations, where immediate rewards from overfishing overshadow the irreversible damage done to marine biodiversity. The annihilation of crucial "ecosystem engineers" is a prime example of anthropocentric victimization, leaving the ecosystem in a state of continual vulnerability, with species loss and habitat destruction leaving a void that future generations may never be able to replenish. This has led to the creation of a vicious cycle where the original victims i.e., the marine species become indicators of broader environmental instability that ultimately threatens human well-being.

5.0 Case Studies on Major Threats to Marine Life

5.1 Whale Slaughter in the Faroe Islands

The grindadráp, or traditional whale hunt, has roots extending back to 800 AD, deeply woven into the cultural fabric of the Faroe Islands. It holds a significant place in Faroese identity, often represented in local art and literature. Historically, the meat and blubber from these pilot whales have been essential to the Faroese diet (Bulbeck & Bowdler, 2008). Each year, roughly 1,150 pilot whales are killed in these hunts, where entire pods, including matron whales, their calves, and unborn young, are often indiscriminately slaughtered. The grindadráp is conducted using customary tools such as knives and spears, maintaining methods passed down through generations (OIPA, 2024). While pilot whales are protected under EU and UK law, the autonomous status of the Faroe Islands within Denmark grants them the authority to establish and enforce their own regulations (Askew, 2024). From the standpoint of green victimology, this practice presents an ethical dilemma because pilot whales as sentient beings experience collective trauma during these hunts. This is termed as a cultural violence, a form of harm justified by tradition yet involving extreme physical suffering and loss of life.

5.2 Shark Finning Industry in Taiwan

Shark finning is a cruel and inhumane practice where fishermen remove the fins from captured sharks, often discarding the mutilated animals back into the ocean while they are still alive (Humane Society International, 2023). Japan plays a significant role in this global trade, with its fisheries harvesting between 20,000 and 30,000 tons of sharks each year (The Government of Japan, 2016). Blue sharks alone contribute to 10,000-15,000 tons of the total catch (Protection of Blue Sharks Expected to Hit Japan's Exports the Asahi Shimbun Asia & Japan Watch, n.d.). The majority of these fins are exported to markets in China and other countries, where they can fetch up to $1,000 per kilogram (McGuire, 2024). Globally, shark finning supports a massive market, with at least 8,000 tonnes of shark fins shipped each year to restaurants, particularly in Asia. Hong Kong serves as the epicenter of this trade, where over 10,000 shark fins can be seen drying on rooftops at any given time (Rodenbiker *et al.,* 2023). This relentless demand has contributed to a drastic decline in shark populations, with some species experiencing reductions of 70% to 90% over the past few decades (Hopkins & Miller, 2021). More than thirty species of sharks are currently listed as threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (*IUCN* | SHARKPROJECT, n.d.). In June 2024, authorities intercepted a vessel carrying over 6,500 kilograms of shark fins, likely representing the slaughter of 2,000 to 3,000 sharks (Crook, 2024). Despite regulations requiring that fins remain attached to the shark carcass or stored together during unloading, enforcement is often complex and costly. While countries like the U.S. and members of the European Union have introduced stringent measures, such as the U.S. Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2021, which bans all shark fin trade, countries like China, India, and Indonesia continue to permit the practice (Oceana, 2023). This gruesome act exemplifies a deeply troubling transgression of ecological justice subjecting the apex predators to immense cruelty. The depletion has exacerbated their victim status, as entire species are pushed toward extinction, creating lasting harm not only to individual animals but to global biodiversity and the health of ocean ecosystems.

5.3 Sea Turtles as Bycatch

Bycatch from fisheries is a major contributor to the decline of marine megafauna populations, particularly impacting species such as sea turtles, sea birds and marine mammals (Lin *et al.,* 2023). Sea turtles, suffer devastating consequences when entangled in fishing gear, leading to injuries such as cuts, bruises, and, in severe cases, drowning

or death from exhaustion (Fisheries, n.d.). According to the IUCN, six of the seven sea turtle species are either threatened or endangered, with the Kemp's Ridley turtle being the most critically endangered, with fewer than 1,000 nesting females remaining (Fisheries, 2021). In U.S. waters, shrimp fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico are among the largest sources of sea turtle mortality. To address this, shrimp trawlers in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic are mandated to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to minimize bycatch (Fisheries, n.d.). However, bycatch issues persist in other regions, such as Mexico's halibut and shark fisheries off Baja California, where thousands of loggerhead turtles are caught annually (Diversity, 2023). Recently, the discovery of approximately 1,600 Olive Ridley turtle carcasses washed ashore in Odisha, India, has shed light upon the ongoing global threat of bycatch to sea turtles (Senapati, 2024). This is often an overlooked dimension of ecological victimization, where sea turtles become unintended casualties of human activity, marking them as victims of both negligence and exploitation within the global fishing industry. The fishing industry is a death machine spreading systemic violence against powerless sea turtles and other marine species that are silent, unseen victims of a practice that prioritizes human economic interests over the sanctity of marine life.

6.0 Green Victimology: A New Perspective

Green victimology is a progressive field that broadens the understanding of victimhood, attributing it to non-human entities, a departure from traditional and human-centered frameworks. Historically, within the scope of victimology, the notion of a "victim" has been exclusively associated with humans, leaving animals, plants, and ecosystems largely overlooked (Angkasa, 2020). This negligence and downplay is often driven by deeper power dynamics of control, exploitation, and vested interests. Green victimology recognizes environmental victimhood by advancing the principles of environmental, ecological, and species justice (White, 2018). This approach is built upon the foundation of intrinsic value of nature that advocates for the inherent worth of flora, fauna, and ecosystems beyond their utilitarian purposes, pushing reconceptualization of nature not merely as a resource for human exploitation but as a subject of rights and an object deserving protection (Rea & Munns, 2017). The central theme to this discourse is the tension between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism (Rülke *et al.,* 2020). However, no matter how much this emerging field grants victimhood, a persistent hierarchy of speciesism always prevails where legal protection and recognition are subject to societal perceptions of a species' worth (White, 2018). Research into environmental crime has often lacked the theoretical and methodological depth applied to more traditional forms of crime, in part due to the perception of environmental harm as "victimless" with consequences that are often diffused, or undetected for long periods (Skinnider, 2011). Green victimology must develop tough scientific and conceptual tools to measure and evaluate harm and value within complex ecological interdependencies. The pressure and agitation between the rights of humans, ecosystems, and non-human species has demanded thoughtful navigation. These conflicts necessitate proper settlement, fundamental to shape the future of green victimology and its role in safeguarding the environment and its inhabitants.

7.0 Regulatory Frameworks Safeguarding Marine Lives

Marine life is offered protection under numerous international, regional and national legal frameworks that work towards preventing environmental harm by regulating anthropogenic activities and promoting biodiversity conservation. Major regulatory instruments and control mechanisms are:

7.1 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

UNCLOS known as the "constitution of oceans" was adopted in 1982, entered into force in 1994 governs various maritime issues including navigation, territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and the protection of the marine environment (*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, n.d.). Within the framework of UNCLOS, the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty, also called the "High Seas Treaty," adopted in June 2023, is a landmark development, which establishes a legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and regulating human activities like deep-

sea mining (*A Win for the Ocean: High Seas Treaty Signed at United Nations*, 2023).

7.2 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

CITES adopted in 1973 keeps tab on the international trade of endangered species to prevent their exploitation, including marine species such as sharks, rays, sea turtles, and corals. In the year 2022, additional shark species such as hammerheads and guitarfish were added to the Appendix II list under CITES, in order to tighten regulations on the trade of shark fins which is a major cause of shark population shrinkage (*CITES: Shark Fin Trade Finally Regulated as Nearly 100 Species Provided Protection*, 2022).

7.3 International Whaling Commission (IWC) Moratorium

The IWC moratorium on commercial whaling, is a major global agreement to halt the unsustainable hunting of whales, in effect since 1986. Although the moratorium remains intact, there has been intense pressure from nations like Japan, Norway, and Iceland to recommence commercial whaling (*Whales Threatened: Japan Announces It Will Resume Commercial Hunting*, 2019). For instance, in 2019, Japan officially withdrew from the IWC and effectively ended the commercial whaling moratorium that had been enforced since 1982. This exit enabled the country to legally recommence commercial whaling operations within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (*Commercial Whaling*, n.d.).

7.4 Creation of Marine Protected Areas

MPAs are designated ocean regions where human activities are regulated to conserve biodiversity and safeguard vital ecosystems to help it reinvigorate. A growing global initiative, known as 30x30, aims to protect 30% of the Earth's land and oceans by 2030 and is a key component of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, also referred to as the Biodiversity Plan. In response to commitments made at the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), many nations have expanded their MPA coverage to meet this target (Pike *et al.,* 2024).

7.5 EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

The CFP is a regulatory framework that governs fisheries in the European Union, aiming to ensure sustainable fishing practices and preventing overfishing and imposes quotas, fishing gear restrictions, and measures to reduce bycatch. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, in line with EU CFP aims to reduce seabed trawling and restrict harmful fishing practices (Hermoso *et al.,* 2021).

7.6 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The European Union has established its first limits on underwater noise pollution to protect marine biodiversity. The regulations cap exposure to continuous noise, such as from shipping, at 20% of a marine habitat annually, while exposure to impulsive noise is limited to 20% of a habitat per day and 10% annually. These limits, developed under the MSFD, are part of the EU Zero Pollution Action Plan and aim to protect marine species from noise-induced hearing impairments and behavioral disruptions (Directorate General for Environment, 2022).

7.7 Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 in India

This is a fundamental law protecting various marine species, including dolphins, sea turtles, and dugongs, under various schedules. In particular, Schedule I lists species like the Olive Ridley Turtle and Gangetic Dolphin, providing them the highest protection against unsustainable activities like poaching, hunting, and exploitation (Sridhar *et al*., 2005).

Despite the adoption of regulatory frameworks, oceans and marine animals continue to suffer as silent victims of human activities due to common challenges including enforcement deficiencies, jurisdictional gaps, conflicting interests, economic pressures, inconsistent global commitment, inadequate coverage, weak public awareness, and political will, fragmented monitoring, and limited adaptability to new threats.

8.0 Conclusion and Last Thoughts

Against the backdrop of green victimology, recognizing marine animals as victims involves moving beyond anthropocentric views that place human interests above ecological welfare, shifting toward an ecocentric perspective that respects the rights and inherent worth of marine species.

The overall health of the oceanic biosphere is taken care by marine animals occupying unique ecological niches. Any harm inflicted on these animals sends ripples far beyond the ocean, disrupting not just marine ecosystems but reverberating across the entire planet, unsettling the delicate balance of life on a global scale. Green victimology argues for the contextual consideration of the specific harm faced by marine animals, necessitating a deeper understanding of their ecological roles and the unique dangers they encounter. This approach could aid in crafting policies that go beyond mere conservation efforts, promoting genuine ecological justice by promoting stronger legal protections, sustainable practices, and the restoration of marine habitats.

The idea of adopting veganism is not encouraged because how realistic is it really? Instead, an ecocentric approach can guide the responsible use of nature, emphasizing the need to minimize harm while recognizing the interconnectedness of all life. Human beings, like any other species, have a right to thrive, which unavoidably involves some level of damage, disruption, and exploitation of other species and their habitats. But the goal should be to make choices that reduce such harm and promote the flourishing of the broadest spectrum of organisms and ecosystems, including our own. This balance will ensure that while human life advances, it does so in a way that seeks to coexist harmoniously with the natural world.

In the broader context, we must recognize ocean conservation not merely as an environmental duty but as an act of cultural preservation. As ecological crises intensify, it becomes essential to transcend the traditional human-centered view and acknowledge marine animals as victims of ecological injustice. Now is the time to shift our perspective, recognizing the inherent value of marine species and their right to thrive within their ecosystems.

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