**10. WILDLIFE RESOURCES OF ETHIOPIA**

* 1. **Introduction**

One of the greatest controversies raging in various circles for decades is the debate between economic development and environmental conservation. While pragmatist scientists say that a balance can be reached between the two polarized states of economic development and conservation, others preach that it is impossible since one naturally cancels the other. The core of the question remains how we can make development more environmentally sensitive or how we can ensure environment is kept relatively intact without interfering with fundamental ecological services. Development requires the input of natural resources and it would be awkward to think of development without making use of natural resources. The classic definition of sustainable development, “to ensure the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” has elements of intergenerational equity.

The current staggering status of Ethiopia’s protected areas is the result of conflict between these seemingly polarized ideas of conservation and development, which is one among the multifaceted other problems facing conservation areas of Ethiopia. This unit tries to assess biodiversity of Ethiopia, the conservation status of its protected areas and constraints in wildlife management.

* 1. **Diversity of Ethiopian wildlife**

Eastern Africa’s biological diversity reflects its position along the equator and high variability of landscape and aquatic systems. These conditions in Ethiopia provide suitable habitat for a large variety of living organisms, especially birds with very limited ranges. Among several types of habitats, wetlands shelter countless species of fauna and flora of which the most widely explored and appreciated are birds. Many wetlands are renowned because of their birdlife. They are sites for wintering or passage migrants. There are around 214 Palearctic migrants occurring in Ethiopia. Around 25% (204) of bird species in Ethiopia are wetland dependent. Ethiopia has high bird species diversity that amounts to a total of 926 species, of which 23 are endemic and three are rare or accidental.

The Ethiopian highlands are noted for high level of endemism. They also support fauna and flora transitional to the Afro-tropical and Palaearctic zones. Four large mammal species; the critically endangered Walia Ibex, the endangered Mountain Nyala, Semien Fox and Gelada baboon, are endemic to the Ethiopian highlands. Eastern Ethiopia also possesses the endemic African wild ass. This was widespread in North Africa at the turn of the century where the population in Somalia alone was estimated to exceed 10,000, but at present the species is restricted to Ethiopia’s Afar desert.

* 1. **Ethiopian wildlife conservation areas and their target species**

Ehiopia has several National parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, reserves and Controlled hunting areas. Among eleven publicly recognized national parks in Ethiopia only two (Semien National Park and Awash National Park) are gazette. The rest are left legally un-recognized till today. This situation has imposed substantial problems rendering the Parks unable to meet their conservation objectives. The National Parks of Ethiopia and the major fauna they conserve are described briefly in the following sections.