

The sad state of biodiversity

October 5 2012

Factfile on biodiversity ahead of talks opening Monday under the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Hyderabad, India.

— Out of 63,837 species on the "Red List" updated annually by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 19,817 are at risk of extinction.

— Of these, 3,947 are critically endangered, 5,766 endangered and 10,104 considered vulnerable. Sixty-three species have become extinct in the wild and 801 have been completely wiped out.

— Threatened groups include 41 percent of all [amphibian species](#), 33 percent of reef-building corals, 25 percent of mammals, 20 percent of plants and 13 percent of birds.

— Last year, scientists wrote in the journal Nature that Man may have unleashed the sixth known [mass extinction](#) in Earth's history—the last having wiped out the dinosaurs some [65 million years](#) ago.

— About 1.75 million species of plants, insects and microorganisms have so far been identified by researchers, with scientists estimating there are between three million and 100 million species on Earth.

— Indian economist Pavan Sukhdev, in a report in 2010, estimated that biodiversity loss came at a cost of between 1.35 trillion and 3.1 trillion euros (\$1.75 trillion and \$4 trillion) per year.

— Countries pledged under the [Millennium Development Goals](#) to achieve a "significant reduction" in the rate of plant and animal loss by 2010, a goal the UN has admitted was badly missed.

— The last CBD conference in Nagoya, Japan in 2010, adopted a 20-point plan to turn back biodiversity loss by 2020.

— Its targets include halving the rate of habitat loss, expanding water and land areas under conservation, preventing the [extinction of species](#) currently on the threatened list, and restoring at least 15 percent of degraded ecosystems.

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