

# Cities support a greater number of threatened species than non-urban areas

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The earth is facing a catastrophic species extinction crisis. The dominant approach to conservation has been to focus on protecting pristine environments, but new research from Australia demonstrates that on average, urban environments contain disproportionately more threatened protected species in a given area than non-urban environments.

Investigators looked at the distributions of 1,643 [protected species](#) in Australia, and counted up the number of these species that occurred in square-kilometer units across the continent. By comparing the cells found in cities with those located in non-urban areas, the researchers explored the relative importance of cities for conserving nationally-protected species.

All cities in Australia contained protected species, and 30% of the species listed as protected in Australia inhabited [urban environments](#). Cities consistently supported a greater number of protected species than other areas.

The findings highlight the opportunities that cities present for tackling biodiversity loss.

"Our results show that to tackle species extinction we can no longer afford to ignore the places where most of us live and work," said Dr. Christopher Ives, co-lead author of the *Global Ecology and Biogeography* study. "In Australia, every city has a role to play in safeguarding the country's most threatened biodiversity."

**More information:** *Global Ecology and Biogeography*,  
[dx.doi.org/10.1111/geb.12404](https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.12404)

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