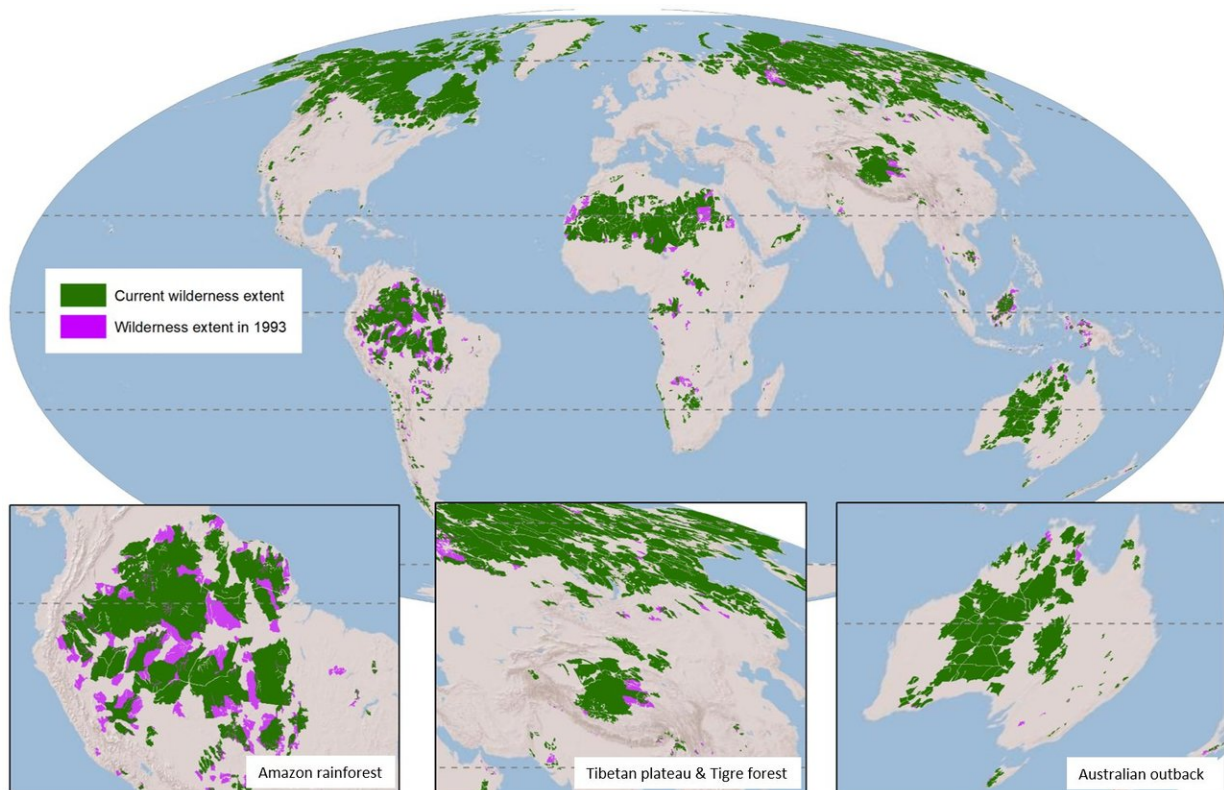


New maps show shrinking wilderness being ignored at our peril

December 12 2017



These new maps show shrinking wilderness being ignored at our peril. Credit: James Allan UQ

Maps of the world's most important wilderness areas are now freely available online following a University of Queensland and Wildlife Conservation Society-led study published today.

The authors have made the maps available to assist researchers, conservationists and [policy makers](#) to improve wilderness conservation.

UQ School of Earth and Environmental Sciences PhD student James Allan said these wilderness areas were strongholds for endangered biodiversity and critical in the fight to mitigate climate change.

"These ecosystems play a key role in regulating local climates, sequestering and storing large amounts of carbon and supporting many of the world's most culturally diverse - but politically and economically marginalized communities," Allan said.

The maps show that the majority of remaining wilderness areas are in the deserts of Central Australia, the Amazon rainforest in South America, the Tibetan plateau in central Asia, and the boreal (snow) forests of Canada and Russia.

"Despite their importance, [wilderness areas](#) are being destroyed at an alarming rate and need urgent protection with almost 10 per cent being lost since the early 1990s. Their conservation is a global priority," Allan said.

Wildlife Conservation Society and UQ Associate Professor James Watson said he anticipated the maps would be important for identifying places where conservation actions must occur, and as indicators of progress towards United Nations commitments such as Sustainable Development Goals.

Said Watson: "Environmental policy almost completely ignored wilderness conservation but this has to change. National governments and multilateral environmental agreements such as the World Heritage convention need to step up and protect wilderness before it is too late."

More information: James R. Allan et al, Temporally inter-comparable maps of terrestrial wilderness and the Last of the Wild, *Scientific Data* (2017). [DOI: 10.1038/sdata.2017.187](https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2017.187)

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

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