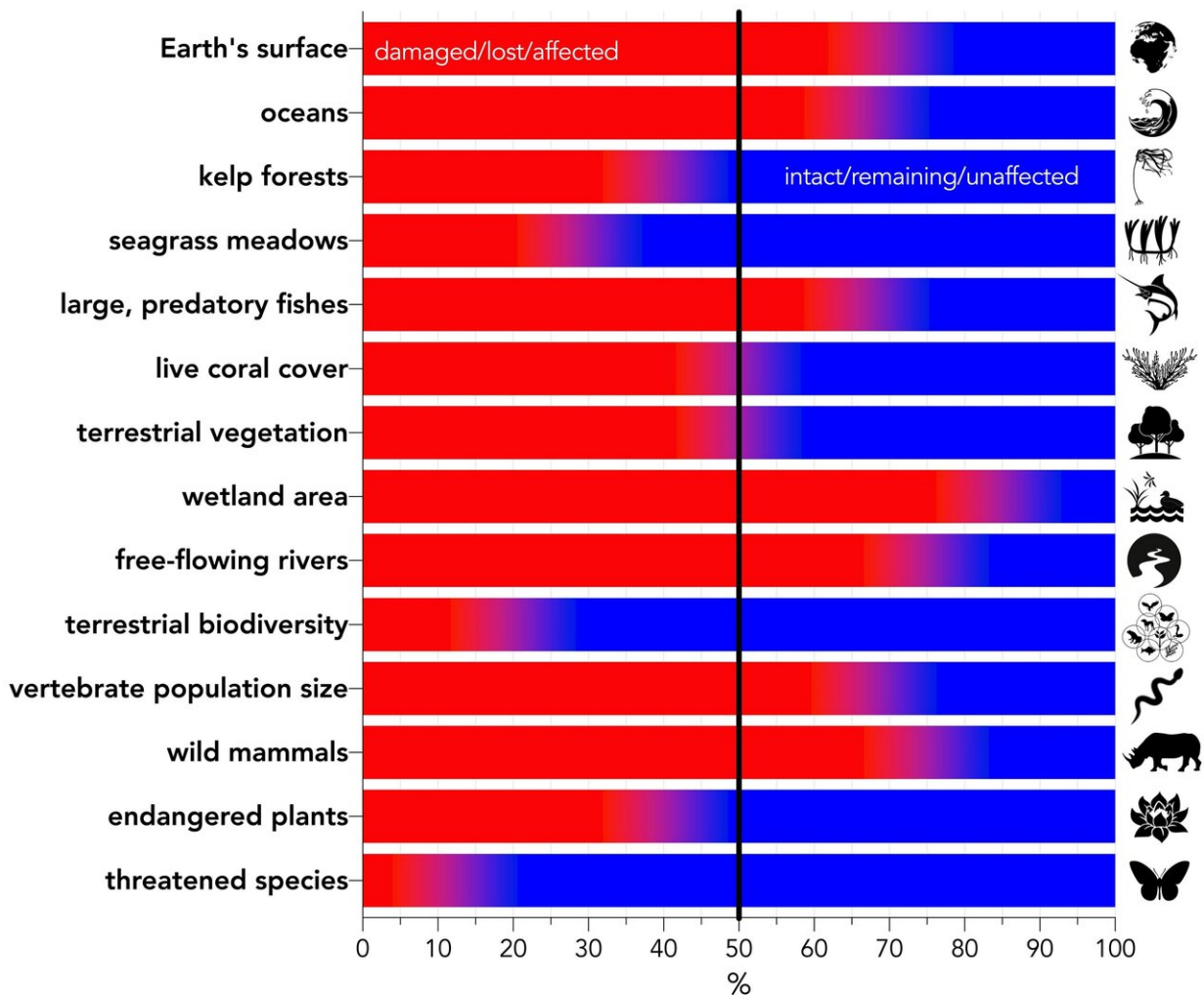


Expert prognosis for the planet—we're on track for a ghastly future

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Summary of major environmental-change categories expressed as percentage relative to the baseline given in the text. Red indicates the percentage of the category that is damaged, lost, or otherwise affected, whereas blue indicates the

percentage that is intact, remaining, or otherwise unaffected. Credit: Bradshaw et al.

A loss of biodiversity and accelerating climate change in the coming decades coupled with ignorance and inaction is threatening the survival of all species, including our very own, according to the experts from institutions including Stanford University, UCLA, and Flinders University.

The researchers state that [world leaders](#) need a 'cold shower' regarding the state of our environment, both to plan and act to avoid a ghastly future.

Lead author Professor Corey Bradshaw of Flinders University in Australia says he and his colleagues have summarised the state of the natural world in stark form to help clarify the gravity of the human predicament.

"Humanity is causing a rapid [loss of biodiversity](#) and, with it, Earth's ability to support complex life. But the mainstream is having difficulty grasping the magnitude of this loss, despite the steady erosion of the fabric of human civilization" Professor Bradshaw says.

"In fact, the scale of the threats to the biosphere and all its lifeforms is so great that it is difficult to grasp for even well-informed experts.

"The problem is compounded by ignorance and short-term self-interest, with the pursuit of wealth and political interests stymying the action that is crucial for survival" he says.

Professor Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University says that no political or

economic system, or leadership, is prepared to handle the predicted disasters, or even capable of such action.

"Stopping biodiversity loss is nowhere close to the top of any country's priorities, trailing far behind other concerns such as employment, healthcare, [economic growth](#), or currency stability.

"While it is positive news that President-elect Biden intends to reengage the US in Paris Climate accord within his first 100 days of office, it is a minuscule gesture given the scale of the challenge.

"Humanity is running an ecological Ponzi scheme in which society robs nature and [future generations](#) to pay for short-term economic enhancement today".

"Most economies operate on the basis that counteraction now is too costly to be politically palatable. Combined with disinformation campaigns to protect short-term profits it is doubtful that the scale of changes we need will be made in time" Professor Ehrlich says.

Professor Dan Blumstein from UCLA says the scientists are choosing to speak boldly and fearlessly because life literally depends on it.

"What we are saying might not be popular, and indeed is frightening. But we need to be candid, accurate, and honest if humanity is to understand the enormity of the challenges we face in creating a sustainable future.

"Without political will backed by tangible action that scales to the enormity of the problems facing us, the added stresses to human health, wealth, and well-being will perversely diminish our political capacity to mitigate the erosion of the Earth's life-support system upon which we all depend.

"Human population growth and consumption continues to escalate, and we're still more focused on expanding human enterprise than we are on devising and implementing solutions to critical issues such as biodiversity loss. By the time we fully comprehend the impact of ecological deterioration, it will be too late.

"Without fully appreciating and broadcasting the scale of the problems and the enormity of the solutions required, society will fail to achieve even modest sustainability goals, and catastrophe will surely follow" Professor Blumstein concludes.

The experts say their 'perspective' paper, which cites more than 150 studies, seeks to outline clearly and unambiguously the likely future trends in biodiversity decline, mass extinction, climate disruption, planetary toxification, all tied to human consumption and population growth to demonstrate the near certainty that these problems will worsen over the coming decades, with negative impacts for centuries to come. It also explains the impact of political impotence and the ineffectiveness of current and planned actions to address the ominous scale of environmental erosion.

The perspective paper "Underestimating the challenges of avoiding a ghastly future" is published in *Frontiers in Conservation Science*.

More information: Underestimating the Challenges of Avoiding a Ghastly Future , [DOI: 10.3389/fcosc.2020.615419](https://doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2020.615419) , www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcosc.2020.615419/full

Provided by Flinders University

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