

Nature in steep decline due to human activities: WWF Living Planet Report 2018

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Credit: Scott S Warren / National Geographic Creative

The ways in which humans feed, fuel and finance our societies and economies are pushing our planet's natural systems – which support all life on earth—to the edge, according to WWF's [Living Planet Report](#)

[2018](#) released today.

A comprehensive overview of the state of our natural world, the Living Planet Report 2018 presents a sobering analysis of the impact of humans on the world's wildlife, forests, oceans, rivers, and climate, and the implications for vital services nature provides. The Living Planet Index (LPI) indicates that global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles declined, on average, by 60 per cent between 1970 and 2014, with freshwater species hit hardest. The top threats to species are directly linked to human activities, including habitat loss and degradation, and overexploitation of wildlife.

The findings also demonstrate that the window for action is closing rapidly, and underline the urgent need for the global community to collectively rethink and redefine how we value, protect and restore nature.

"We cannot build a prosperous future for Europe and its citizens on a depleted planet, so economic and environmental agendas must converge if we are to build a sustainable Europe for all," said Ester Asin, Director of WWF's European Policy Office. "With the upcoming EU elections and the resulting renewal of key decision-making bodies, Europe has the opportunity to revive its global leadership on climate change and nature conservation, by taking decisive actions at home and driving a new global deal for nature and people. Europe must lead by example by adopting an ambitious post-2020 EU diversity strategy, and integrating biodiversity and climate protection into all relevant sectoral policies."

WWF is calling for a comprehensive framework agreement for nature and people under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which must galvanize action to protect and restore biodiversity. At EU level, WWF is asking for an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity strategy to halt and reverse nature loss, mainstreaming of climate and biodiversity

protection into key economic sectors through its agriculture, water, infrastructure and development, and climate and energy policies, a reflection of these priorities in the next EU budget, and full implementation and enforcement of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Water Framework Directive.

Rivers, lakes & wetlands suffer worst biodiversity decline

Freshwater ecosystems, such as rivers, lakes and wetlands, are continuing to deteriorate at breakneck speed, with species abundance declined by 83% since 1970. Lakes, rivers and wetlands are critical for people, nature and economies, yet they are under growing pressure from pollution, dam development, and soaring demand for water to irrigate farms and fuel hydropower plants. In Europe, only 40% of surface waters are currently considered healthy (EEA, 2018), despite EU Member States' legal obligation to protect and restore all freshwater bodies under the Water Framework Directive – the law which protects all freshwater bodies in the EU and obliges Member States to restore those which have already been damaged to good health. But there is now a strong push from EU Member States to weaken this law.

"Without full, effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive, it will be impossible to defend our rivers and lakes, and the incredible biodiversity that depends on them", said Andreas Baumüller, Head of Natural Resources at WWF's European Policy Office. "It's time we heard a little less conversation and saw a lot more action from EU Member States, and that they seriously stepped up their game to make this visionary law work not just on paper, but in practice!"

The WWF European network, together with 100 NGOs across Europe, is currently running the #ProtectWater campaign to keep the EU water

law strong, calling citizens to have their say in the current European Commission's public consultation.

Provided by WWF

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