



## In Depth: Biodiversity Report

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**Living Planet Report released by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature documents the state of the earth in terms of biodiversity and indicates the raising demand on natural resources and its impact on nature and wildlife. The report is said to reveal the health of the Earth.**

Since the dawn of civilization, humankind has destroyed more than 80% of all mammals and half of the plants on the planet. Many scientists feel that the world has begun its 6th mass extinction caused by human beings. The Living Planet Report 2018 presents a picture of the impact of human activities on world's wildlife, forest, oceans, and rivers. According to it, humans pose a risk to the planet.

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## World Wildlife Fund

- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961, working in the field of wilderness preservation, and the reduction of human impact on the environment.
- HQ- Switzerland

### **Living Planet Report**

- Published every two years by WWF since 1998.
- It is based on a Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation.

## Concerns Raised by WWF 2018

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- Earth is losing biodiversity at a rate which can only be seen during a mass extinction.
- Humans have made many innovations to make their life much easier but in this process, they have over-exploited the resources and damaged the web of life.
- World's 7.6 billion people represent only 0.01 of all living things, yet since the inception of civilization, they have caused the destruction of 83% mammal and half of the plants.
- If the conservation efforts won't come in action now, the situation may worsen as the consumption percentage has raised 119% in the last 3 years.

### **Main Cause of Concern- PLASTIC**

- Only 15% plastic waste is left on the earth's surface and rest reaches the sea.
- In 2010, about 4.8 million to 12.7 million tonnes of waste went into the sea. 35% of turtles ate plastic in the form of food.
- The Report warns that if the plastic flow into the sea isn't stopped immediately, then by 2050 plastic will be found in the digestive system of 99% of marine organisms.
- Microplastics, which never decompose, will reach aquatic animals through food and cause danger for them.

## Findings of the Report

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- Earth witnessed the decline in mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians between 1970-2014. Data covers over 16700 population belonging to 4000 species.
- Destruction of natural habitats is the biggest cause of wildlife losses. Three-quarters of land on Earth is affected by human activities.
- Killing for food is another major cause for wildlife losses. 300 mammal species have already being eaten into extinction.
- Major habitats suffering are water bodies like rivers, ponds etc. Oceans are massively overfished - more than half being industrially fished.

- Wildlife population in rivers, lakes has fallen to 83% due to agricultural activities and increased number of dams.
- Ocean acidification is occurring at a rate not seen in the last 300 million years.
- 50% of shallow water corals have estimated to have been lost in the past 30 years.
- 89% loss in vertebrate population in South America and Central America due to deforestation.
- A fifth of the Amazon has disappeared in just 50 years.
- The area of minimally disturbed forests has declined by 92 million hectares between 2000-2013.
- Humans are responsible for releasing 100 billion tonnes of carbon into the ecosystem every 10 years.
- According to the Report, around 70,000 medicinal plant species have also been affected.
- Human activities associated with production and processing have an enormous effect on biodiversity. Agriculture accounts for a lion's share in the conversion of forest land, a decrease in forest area impact both plant and animals.

## Way Forward

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- Human beings must change their approach to development. They need to understand how protecting nature is also about protecting themselves.
- The Report calls for new goals post-2020 alongside Convention on Biological Diversity, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Report suggests three necessary steps in a roadmap for the post-2020 agenda:
  - clearly specify the goal for biodiversity recovery,
  - develop a set of measurable and relevant indicators of progress, and
  - agree to a suite of actions that can collectively achieve the goal in the required timeframe.
- Man-animal conflicts should be reduced, afforestation should be done and laws should be sharpened to punish the poachers.
- Use of technology should be done in the right way for biodiversity conservation.