



Living Planet Report 2018

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has recently released **Living Planet Report 2018** along with **Living Planet Index**.

- The report also explores three other indicators measuring changes in species distribution, extinction risk and changes in community composition. All these show severe declines or changes.
- The **Living Planet Index (LPI) is an indicator of the state of global biodiversity and the health of our planet.**
- It was **first published in 1998.**
- LPI tracks the population abundance of thousands of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians around the world.

Key Findings of Report

- **Populations crashing (In the period of 1970-2014)**
 - The main reasons for biodiversity decline continue to be the overexploitation of species, agriculture, and land conversion.
 - 60% Loss of vertebrates (animals with a backbone)
 - 80% decline in freshwater fauna population
 - 90% loss of wildlife in Latin America, which is the worst-hit region
- **Species disappearing**
 - The index of extinction risk for five major groups birds, mammals, amphibians, corals and an ancient family of plants called cycads shows an accelerating fall.
 - The current rate at which species are going extinct is 100 to 1,000 times greater than the natural rate of extinction.
 - This means that Earth has entered a mass extinction event, only the sixth in half-a-billion years.
- **Boundaries breached**
 - In 2009, scientists weighed the impact of humanity's expanding appetites on nine processes known as Earth systems within nature. Each has a critical threshold, the upper limit of a "safe operating space" for human species.
 - The critical threshold for climate change is global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius.
 - So far, humans have clearly breached two of these planetary boundaries: species loss, and imbalances in Earth's natural cycles of nitrogen and phosphorous (mainly due to fertilizer use).
 - For two others, climate and land degradation, we have begun breaching critical threshold indicators. Ocean acidification and freshwater supply are not far behind. As for new

chemical pollutants such as endocrine disruptors, heavy metals, and plastics are concerned, their full impact is yet to be assessed.

▪ **Forests shrinking**

- Exploding human consumption is the driving force behind the unprecedented planetary change. Earth is witnessing, through the increased demand for energy, land, and water.
- Consumption indicators – such as the Ecological Footprint – provide a picture of overall resource use.
- Nearly 20 percent of the Amazon rainforest, the world's largest, has disappeared in five decades. Tropical deforestation continues unabated, mainly to make way for soybeans, palm oil, and cattle.
- Globally, between 2000 and 2014, the world lost 920,000 square kilometers of intact or "minimally disturbed" forest, an area roughly the size of Pakistan or France and Germany combined.

▪ **Oceans depleted**

- Plastic pollution has been detected in all major marine environments worldwide, from shorelines and surface waters down to the deepest parts of the ocean, including the bottom of the Mariana Trench.
- Freshwater habitats, such as lakes, rivers, and wetlands, are most threatened.
- These are strongly affected by a range of factors including habitat modification, fragmentation and destruction; invasive species; overfishing; pollution; disease; and climate change.
- Since 1950, humans have extracted six billion tonnes of fish, crustaceans, clams, squids and other edible sea creatures.
- Climate change and pollution have killed off half of the world's shallow-water coral reefs, which support more than a quarter of marine life.
- Coastal mangrove forests, which protect against storm surges made worse by rising seas, have also declined by up to half over the last 50 years.

Way Forward

- With two key global policy processes underway – the setting of new post-2020 targets for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals – there is currently a unique window of opportunity to reverse the trend.
- Lessons can be learned from progress towards addressing other critical global issues, like climate change, and everyone – governments, business, finance, research, civil society, and individuals – has a part to play.