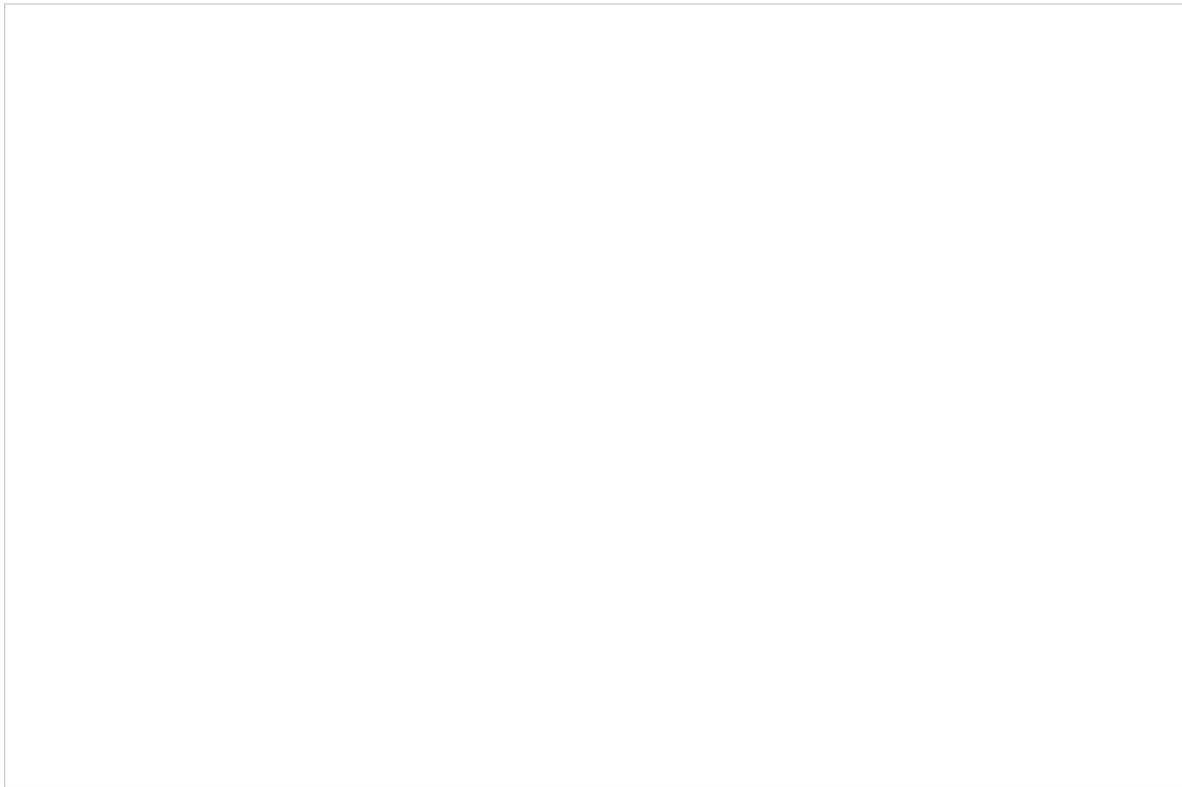




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UN Report on Species Extinction

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The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has released the **UN report on species extinction**. It is estimated that up to 1 million of the estimated 8 million plant and animal species on Earth are at risk of extinction within decades.

Significance of the report

- The assessment is the most accurate and comprehensive review yet of the damage people are inflicting on the planet. And they warn that **nature is declining at "unprecedented" rates** and that the changes will put people at risk.
- The report identified a **range of risks**, from the **disappearance of insects** vital for pollinating food crops, to the **destruction of coral reefs** that support fish populations

that sustain coastal communities, or the **loss of medicinal plants**.

- **Decline of native species** in most major land-based habitats by at least 20%, mostly since 1900.
- It emphasizes that **business and financial concerns are also threatened**. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.
- **Key global threats:** human's **use of land and sea resources, climate change, pollution** and **invasive species**.
- **Ocean ecosystems degrading** as temperatures rise towards 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. **Loss of coral reefs** to warming and acidifying oceans could cause a collapse in commercial and indigenous fisheries.

Some of the report's notable findings

- **Damage extent:** 75% of the land environment and 66% of the marine environment impacted due to anthropogenic activities.
- **Loss of pollinators:** Up to \$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss. Insect pollinators are unfortunately an excellent example of the problems caused by human activities. "There's a newly coined phrase for insect declines — the '**windshield effect**'.
- **Increased risk of floods and hurricanes** because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.
- **Pollution and waste**
 - Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980.
 - 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other industrial waste are dumped into the world's water systems.

Conclusion

- Biodiversity and nature's contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting 'safety net.' But **our safety net is stretched almost to breaking point**.
- Humans as both the cause of the threat and a target of its risks. As humanity demands ever more food, energy, housing and other resources, they say, it's also undermining its food security and long-term prospects.
- The essential, **interconnected web of life on Earth is getting smaller** and increasingly frayed.
- Profound economic and social changes would be needed to curb greenhouse gases quickly enough to avert the most devastating consequences of a warming world.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012.

Objective of IPBES: Strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.

The windshield effect

Also, the windscreen phenomenon is a term given to the anecdotal observation that people tend to find fewer insects smashed on the windscreens of their cars now compared to a decade or several decades ago. This effect has been ascribed to major global declines in insect abundance.