

Wildlife could drop two-thirds by 2020: WWF



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WWF's Living Planet Report [2016](#) predicts decline of global wildlife populations by an average of 67 per cent in the timeline between 1970 and 2020, [as](#) a result of human activities. The report indicates that global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles have already declined by 58 per cent between 1970 and 2012, the most recent year with available data. This places the world on a trajectory of a potential two-thirds decline within a span of the half-century ending in 2020. The report also highlights the magnitude of human impact on the planet and highlights the changes needed in the way society is fed and fuelled.

“[Wildlife](#) is disappearing within our lifetimes at an unprecedented rate,” said Dr. Marco Lambertini, International Director General, WWF. “This is not just about the wonderful species we all love; biodiversity forms the foundation of healthy forests, rivers and oceans. Take away species, and these ecosystems will collapse along with the [clean](#) air, water, food and climate services that they provide us. We have the tools to fix this problem and we need to [start](#) using them now if we are serious about preserving a living planet for our own survival and prosperity.”

According to the report, the top threats to species are directly linked to human activities, including habitat loss, degradation and overexploitation of wildlife. The report's findings provide additional evidence that the planet is entering completely uncharted territory in its history in which humanity is shaping changes on the Earth, including a possible sixth mass extinction. Researchers are already calling this period the Anthropocene— an era in which human activities are influencing changes in the climate and the environment.

The [2016](#) edition of the Living Planet Report states that food production to meet the complex [demands](#) of an expanding human population is the primary factor responsible for the destruction of habitats and

overexploitation of wildlife. At present, [agriculture](#) occupies about one-third of the Earth's total land area and accounts for almost 70 per cent of water use.

The report also shows that [India](#) ranks fifth in terms of bio-capacity – an ecosystem's capacity to produce resources such [as](#) food, fibre and renewable raw materials and absorb carbon dioxide. While Indians have a low personal footprint at an individual [level](#), it is a challenge when aggregated by population size. This equation will be further affected [as](#) wealth grows and consumption patterns change. [India](#)'s carbon footprint currently makes up 53% of the country's overall Ecological Footprint.

“Our consumption patterns and the way we look at our natural world are constantly shaping the future of our planet. At WWF-[India](#) we believe that the power to build a resilient planet for future generations lies in our understanding of how we are moving into this new epoch that scientists are calling the Anthropocene and adopting sustainable practices that decrease humanity's impacts on the planet. We need to come together [as](#) a global [community](#) and address the threats to biodiversity to protect our environment, [as](#) well [as](#) our economic and social structures,” said Mr. Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-[India](#).

Looking ahead, however, 2020 is also a year of great promise. In that year, commitments made under the Paris climate [deal](#) will kick in, and the first environmental actions under the globe's new sustainable development plan are due. If implemented, these measures, along with meeting international biodiversity targets set for 2020, can help achieve the reforms needed in the world's food and energy systems to protect wildlife across the globe.

The Living Planet Report [2016](#) highlights the fact that we need to

rethink how we produce, consume, and value the natural environment. It also illustrates the positive momentum that is building by highlighting recent global agreements on climate change and sustainable [development](#). In particular, the report recognizes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable [Development as](#) an essential guide to decision-making that can ensure that the environment is valued alongside economic and social interests.

Living Planet Report [2016](#): Risk and resilience in a new era is the eleventh edition of WWF's biennial flagship publication. The report tracks [over](#) 14,000 vertebrate populations of [over](#) 3,700 species from 1970 to 2012.

Syed Miraz Ahmed

Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

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