

New Study Warns of Dire Human Impacts if Wildlife Extinction Crisis Continues

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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A scientific study published today concludes that natural life-support systems crucial to the survival of humanity could collapse if action isn't taken to save wildlife populations.

The study in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* examined 29,400 species of terrestrial vertebrates for which data are available and determined that 515 species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles are down to fewer than 1,000 individuals each. The authors warn that extinction is accelerating and that these irreversible losses could contribute to the collapse of human civilization.

"This new study shows yet again that the very survival of humanity is at stake if we don't end the heartbreaking wildlife extinction crisis," said Tierra Curry, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity. "We're no longer looking at the loss of obscure species that most people aren't interested in. We're looking at biological annihilation if we don't act to save life on Earth."

The [study](#), *Vertebrates On the Brink as Indicators of Biological Annihilation and the Sixth Mass Extinction*, was authored by Gerardo Ceballos, Paul Ehrlich and Peter Raven.

More than 400 vertebrates have already gone extinct in the past 100 years. Animals recently lost in the United States include the Tacoma pocket gopher, South Florida rainbow snake, dusky seaside sparrow and black-faced honeycreeper. U.S. land vertebrates on the brink of extinction include the Humboldt marten, Sierra Nevada fisher, eastern red wolf, Kauai 'Akepa, Maui parrotbill and Attwater's prairie chicken.

In a statement unusual in a scientific journal, the authors move beyond science and state that is a "moral imperative" for humans to take action to stop extinction.

"Extinction is a political choice," said Curry. "We've reached a crossroads where our own future is at stake if we don't move away from fossil fuels and end wildlife exploitation, and at the same time, necessarily, address poverty and injustice. Meanwhile the tone-deaf Trump administration has gutted nearly 100 environmental regulations, including the Endangered Species Act."

The United Nations has warned that one million species are at risk of extinction. The authors of today's study support the U.N. estimate and conclude that future rates of extinction are probably underestimated. They support estimates that one-fifth of all species are in danger of extinction by midcentury, and half or more by 2100, if governments don't take action to

stop extinction.

In January the Center released a plan for [Saving Life on Earth](#). The plan calls for the United States to become a global leader in protecting wildlife by declaring the extinction crisis a national emergency, creating new protected areas, and prioritizing wildlife protection over other uses of public lands.

“The response to the coronavirus outbreak has shown us that rapid change is possible and that funding is available to address the extinction crisis,” said Curry.

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