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Global biodiversity targets won't be met by 2020, scientists say

World leaders failing in their pledge to stop wildlife decline, save habitats and create marine reserves

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A dead baby Sumatran elephant found in a river in Serbajadi in east Aceh district, near Leuser conservation area, Sumatra island, Indonesia. Dozens of elephants have died after being poisoned in recent years. Photograph: STR/AFP/Getty Images

World leaders are failing in their pledge to cut the rate at which wildlife lose their homes, according to the the first ever progress report on targets to slow biodiversity loss by the end of the decade. Conservationist called the lack of action a “troubling sign” and a “reality check”.

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[Governments agreed on a set of targets in 2010](#) to stem the destruction of species' habitats, increase the number of nature reserves and stop overfishing, but an international team of more than 30 scientists say in a report that, almost halfway towards the 2020 deadline, the Aichi targets are unlikely to be met.

[Writing in the journal Science](#), in the same week that [a major report by WWF](#) suggested the world had lost half its animals over the past four decades, the scientists say that the state of biodiversity and the pressures on it are getting worse, not better.

A pledge to halve the loss of natural habitats by 2020 will be missed, as will an attempt to reduce fishing to sustainable levels, and a target of having 10% of the world's seas made into protected areas.

Dr Richard Gregory, one of the paper's authors and head of species monitoring and research at the RSPB, said: "World leaders are currently grappling with many crises affecting our future. But this study shows there is a collective failure to address the loss of biodiversity, which is arguably one of the greatest crises facing humanity.

"The natural environment provides us with food, clean water and other natural resources we need for survival, and much more besides to feed our souls and inspire us."

He called the lack of progress a "a troubling sign for us all."

If the 2020 targets are missed, it will not be the first time targets to halt the decline in the richness and

Outlook 4 paints a damning picture of governments' efforts to meet a set of targets agreed in 2010

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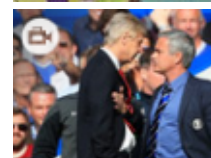
[Earth has lost half of its wildlife in the past 40 years, says WWF](#)

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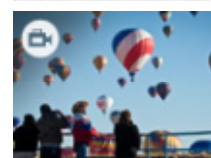


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Gretel, 32

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abundance of wildlife and the natural world have been overshot. [An assessment](#) of goals set in 2002 to cut the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 showed governments had failed to deliver on the commitments they made.

Mike Hoffmann, a senior scientist on species survival commission at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, told the Guardian that “this is a reality check halfway to 2020.”

“We’re in serious danger of being in the same position as we were back in 2010 of not having made the progress we need to make to lead to a better society and a better world.

“It’s not to say we’re not having successes. We don’t do enough to champion the conservation successes, without which we’d be in a much worse situation.”

But, he said: “The bottom line is we’re not doing enough and we’re going to have to do much much more to change things in the next five things.”

The new analysis of progress on the 2020 targets did say that society’s awareness of the problem had improved and efforts to raise funds to tackle the problem were accelerating but not significantly enough. The team looked at 55 indicators to measure the health of biodiversity worldwide, to measure progress on 16 of the 20 Aichi targets agreed in 2010.

“The benefits of maintaining biodiversity are well known,” the report concludes, “... efforts need to be redoubled to positively affect trajectories of change and enable global biodiversity goals to be met by the end of the current decade.”

Officials from nearly a nearly 200 countries are to [meet in Pyeongchang, South Korea, over the next fortnight](#), to discuss how to tackle the problem.

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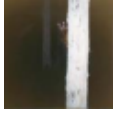
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2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



Albert Ravey

03 October 2014 12:25pm

23

Most of them don't care and some of them even have an ideological hatred of the natural world. We vote for these psychopaths so we can't feel too proud of ourselves, either.



Cloughfern Albert Ravey

03 October 2014 2:39pm

1

So, just how many fully-fledged liberal democracies are there globally...?



Albert Ravey Cloughfern

04 October 2014 4:08pm

3

Enough to make a difference, but they don't. In fact, some of them, notably Australia and Canada, have been taken over by crackpot regimes whose worship of imaginary monetary gods causes them to see life on earth as an obstacle. We're not so far away ourselves - witness the statements of George Osborne.



Matthew2012

03 October 2014 12:28pm

15

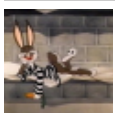
Not only are the targets being missed there are serious questions as to whether the targets were enough to begin with.

If there are 3000 species which have halved in number then it would be shocking if the target had been met. The fact that it is only "unlikely to be met" suggests the target was far too weak.

The 10% marine reserves is disappointing as it is a triple failure on Ocean acidification, global warming and over fishing. It was mainly Putin's Russia that blocked the Antarctic sanctuary.

Likewise the deforestation is alarming not just from biodiversity but from human self interest over climate change.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



JJRichardson

03 October 2014 1:37pm

5

In a sad irony Taxonomists are becoming an endangered species.

http://www.ethlife.ethz.ch/archive_articles/100429_biosystematik_per/index_EN

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/06/taxonomist-shortage-means-newly-discovered-animals-are-unclassified>



SteB1 JJRichardson

03 October 2014 4:49pm

12

Yes, you're right. Clearly there's no money to be made in it. Welcome to neoliberal hell

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