

# Research Report Environmental Commission

Forum: Environmental Commission  
Issue: Fighting against the decrease in biodiversity  
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## Background information

Securing the diversity of our plant and animal species is an important issue of today's modern world and it has only become more necessary to address with the recent years' increase in climate changes. It is a normal process in the life on Earth that species eventually go extinct due to natural changes in the surroundings for longer periods of time such as during the ice age. However, nowadays, the extinction of species is taking place at an increased and critical rate. This is mainly due to human activity causing non-natural changes in the surroundings, which have direct consequences for species as well as ecosystems. Such changes include habitat loss (degradation), over exploitation and the spread of non-native species/diseases. The consequences of such actions can already be seen and on a global scale, a third of all species are faced with potential extinction. For amphibians this is 29 %, for mammals it is 21 % and for birds it is 12 %. It is therefore of greatest necessity that this issue is addressed immediately.<sup>1</sup>

## The importance of biodiversity

There are several reasons for the importance of maintaining a healthy and diverse fauna and animal population. Firstly, it provides us with a broad variety of foods and materials and therefore plays a role in keeping a healthy economy. Less diversity in plants, soils etc. would mean a smaller selection of products offered by supermarkets. Furthermore, many medical discoveries for fighting diseases or increasing life spans were made because of investigations into the genetics and biology of animals and plants. When a species therefore goes extinct, it will never be known if it could have been used for medical purposes. The diversity is also necessary for various processes in nature, which secure clean water, absorbing chemicals as well as providing us with oxygen for breathing. Lastly, biological diversity can prevent diseases and helps species adjust to changes in their surroundings.<sup>2</sup>

## Definitions

Biodiversity: The variety of life on Earth.<sup>3</sup>

Habitat loss: This is the major threat towards biodiversity and is caused by destruction, fragmentation or degradation of habitat. This is when human actions make significant modifications to an ecosystem including agriculture, oil or gas exploration as well as commercial development and water diversion. Such changes mean that the areas may no longer contain the necessary traits for species to survive such as food, water, cover and the possibility of raising offspring.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Biodiversity.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Biodiversity.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/169/biodiversity>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species.aspx>

Overexploitation: The issue, which arises, when the human population takes more of the natural resources than nature can supply it with. The danger occurs, when too many individuals of a species are removed from their natural inhabitant and the species can therefore no longer survive. The loss of one species can then affect an entire ecosystem.<sup>5</sup>

Invasive species: This can be any sort of organism, which does not belong to an ecosystem but causes it harm. They interrupt the natural food chains and local systems and therefore disturbs the natural balance in an environment as they may create problems for other species naturally occurring in the ecosystem.<sup>6</sup>

### Means for fighting the decrease in biodiversity

There are several ways in which the reduction of biodiversity can be slowed down. The most effective way is by creating so-called protected areas where the interference from humans is limited. In order to do so, all parts of the ecosystem they are trying to maintain must be taken into consideration meaning it cannot be too small or restricted. It requires all the resources necessary for the species living in the area.

Another method widely used is to prevent the problem from occurring by inhibit the occurrence of invasive species. In many nations, it is therefore illegal to bring in foreign plants and animals without the required permission.

On a wider level, educating the people on the loss of biodiversity can help increase awareness of the problem and make the people more open towards the idea of helping with maintaining a healthy biodiversity. This may enlighten people enough to make them change their ways of dealing with the environment.

Climate changes are also responsible for a great reduction in the fauna and animal population and have already been the reason for the extinction of many species. However, many individuals, organisations and governments have already taken steps towards a greater awareness of decreasing the global warming.

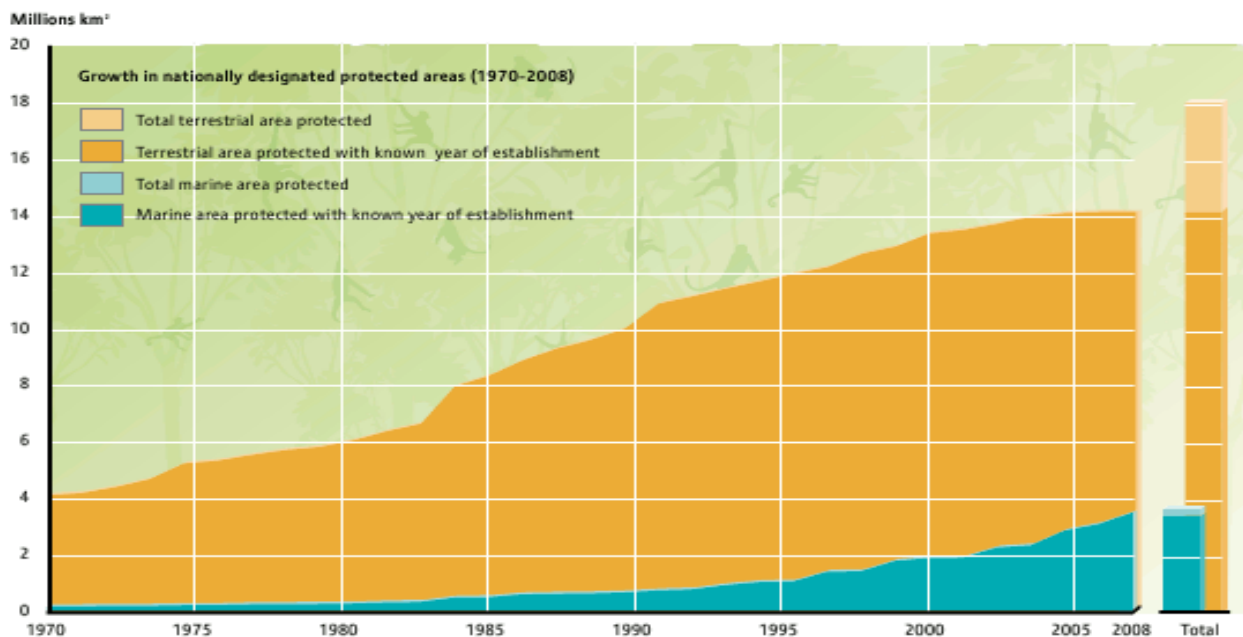
Lastly, a more sustainable agriculture, which ensures the quality of the soil and fields, can also play a significant role in ensuring the conditions for a diverse population in nature.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.priweb.org/globalchange/bioloss/bl\\_06.html](http://www.priweb.org/globalchange/bioloss/bl_06.html)



Graph showing the increase in protected areas.

### Measures taken by the UN

Throughout the years, the United Nations has taken action in fighting the decrease in biodiversity such as creating the 'IPCC for nature' (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) in 2010, which was meant as a measure to fight against the destruction of nature. This arrangement was agreed upon on a conference in South Korea where more than 80 governments decided to take action against the global climate changes. The aim was to create an international response to the problem (IPBES) and make it a concern for the general public as well as on a wider level. It will produce regular assessments of the conditions of biodiversity, both on a worldwide level as well as a local one. Furthermore, it is in charge of greater research on the area as well as functioning as an advisory organisation for governments and organisation.<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, a draft resolution with the title 'Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa' was also adopted without a vote. This resolution called upon member states to take immediate actions in order to stop desertification, land degradation and drought with the help from the United Nations and appropriate organisations, both local as well as international. It furthermore encouraged cooperation in order to assist affected nations.<sup>9</sup>

### Questions to consider

Is the biodiversity in your nation particularly threatened or has it already been reduced?  
 Has a reduction in the biodiversity has any specific consequences for your nation?

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/jun/11/un-ipcc-for-nature-biodiversity>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/gaef3416.doc.htm>

Has your nation done anything itself to preserve biodiversity or participated in projects to do so?  
What could some of the measures to be taken be in your nation?

Useful websites

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/171/loss-of-biodiversity-and-extinctions> - Examples of decreased biodiversity.

<http://www.globalization101.org/international-environmental-problems-and-efforts-to-solve-them-2/> - Examples of problems regarding biodiversity and measures taken against them.

[http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/resolutions/index.php?o=res\\_date&o2=DESC&ps=50&date=&date=0&tracks=666](http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/resolutions/index.php?o=res_date&o2=DESC&ps=50&date=&date=0&tracks=666) – United Nations reports and resolutions.