

Living Planet Report 2020

January 27, 2021

In News: The Living Planet Report is published by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL.) It is a biennial report (published every two years.)

Key findings

- The population of vertebrate species declined by around 68 per cent between 1970 and 2016. Living Planet Index was used by the report to calculate this decline.
- Wildlife populations in freshwater habitats suffered a decline of 84 per cent, equivalent to four per cent per year, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The average two-thirds decline in global populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish in less than 50 years in large parts is due to the same environmental destruction, which is contributing to emergence of zoonotic diseases such as Covid-19.
- 75 percent of earth's ice-free land has been significantly altered, most of the oceans polluted and over 85 per cent area of wetlands lost ~ all due to human activity.
- One in five plants is threatened with extinction.

Factors responsible for this decline

- Land-use change.
- Use and trade of wildlife.
- Natural habitat loss.
- Degradation and deforestation driven by food production processes.

India's scenario

- India has 2.4 per cent global land share, about eight

per cent global biodiversity and around 16 per cent global population

- However, it has lost 12 percent of its wild mammals, 19 per cent amphibians and 3 per cent birds over the last five decades.
- India's ecological footprint per person is less than 1.6 global hectares (gha) / person (smaller than that of many large countries). But, its high population size has made the gross footprint significantly high.

WWF

- WWF is an independent conservation organization, with over 30 million followers and a global network active in nearly 100 countries.
- The mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature.

ZSL

- ZSL (Zoological Society of London) is an international conservation charity working to create a world where wildlife thrives.
- They investigate the health threats facing animals to help people and wildlife live alongside each other, ZSL is committed to bringing wildlife back from the brink of extinction.

Living Planet Index

It works as an indicator of biodiversity health. It measures the state of the world's biological diversity based on the population trends of vertebrate species. (Animals having backbones or vertical columns.)

- It tracks almost 21000 populations of vertebrates.
- The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has adopted LPI as the indicator of progress towards the

convention's 2011-12 target to take actions to halt biodiversity loss.

- Institute of Zoology (ZSL) manages the Living Planet Index.
- ZSL was founded in 1826 and is an international conservation charity.

What is not tracked by the Living Planet Index?

- The numbers of species lost or extinct
- Percentage of species declining
- Percentage of populations or individuals lost

What is the ecological footprint?

Ecological footprint is the biologically productive area needed to provide for everything used by people: fruits and vegetables, fish, wood, fibres, absorption of CO₂ from fossil fuels use, and space for buildings and roads.

- It is currently developed by Global Footprint Network (an independent think-tank). The GHG footprint and carbon footprint are a component of Ecological Footprint.
- Humanity's Ecological Footprint for 2014 was 1.7 planet Earth's. This meant that humanity's demands were 1.7 times faster than what the Earth's ecosystems renewed.