



MEDIA SUMMARY LIVING PLANET REPORT 2026

The Science of Hope

October 2026



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Director General
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“Biodiversity continues to be degraded at an alarming pace. Yet amid these steep declines, there are grounds for hope. *The Living Planet Report 2026* highlights evidence that many species populations are stable or recovering, alongside inspiring stories that show nature can rebound and change is possible. Recoveries in populations of species like tigers, Atlantic and Pacific bluefin tuna, Southern African elephants and green sea turtles show what years of sustained collective conservation effort can achieve.

“To continue and expand these conservation successes, the industries and systems which drive nature loss need to be transformed. Progress is already underway. Not everywhere, and not yet at the scale required, but enough to demonstrate that change is possible. It’s time to accelerate the scale of those systemic changes already underway and work together in harmony with nature to build a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient world. Together we can restore our living planet.”

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The *Living Planet Report 2026* is a comprehensive study of trends in global biodiversity and the health of the planet. Now in its 16th edition, the report provides a science-led overview of the state of the natural world and includes the Living Planet Index (LPI), which tracks how species populations are faring around the world. It shows a **73% decline in the average size** of monitored wildlife populations from 1970-2022.

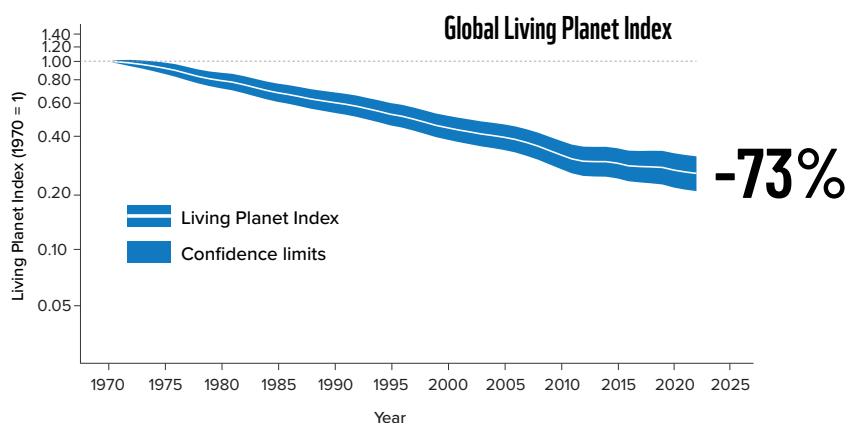


Figure 1 The global Living Planet Index from 1970 to 2022 based on 35,803 monitored populations of 5,790 vertebrate species. The white line represents the index values, and the shaded areas represent the statistical uncertainty around them. We use a logarithmic scale for the y-axis in the Living Planet Index charts, which helps show changes in the index more accurately.

While the overall percentage change is consistent with the previous report, the updated assessment incorporates additional population data and a longer time series, reinforcing the continued scale of biodiversity loss. This aligns with estimates previously reported, and combined with other metrics, shows the scale of nature’s decline.

Habitat loss and degradation are the most frequently reported threats affecting monitored wildlife populations, followed by overexploitation, climate change, pollution, invasive species and disease. These threats are, in turn, driven by broader systemic failures across the food, energy and finance systems.

Alongside these pressures, a different dynamic is emerging – one that points to possibility.

The report highlights recoveries in populations of tigers, Atlantic and Pacific bluefin tuna, southern African elephants and green sea turtles which demonstrate that targeted conservation interventions can deliver proven results. However, the declines registered by the LPI and other biodiversity indicators cannot be reversed by conservation efforts alone.

Transforming the food, energy and finance systems won’t be easy, but can be achieved by creating the conditions to trigger positive tipping points. This will only be successful if the whole of society is involved and the transition is fair and inclusive.

Measuring Nature's Trends

Measuring changes in the size of wildlife populations gives an idea of which species groups are most at risk and can provide an early warning signal of an ecosystem degrading. This can spur action to prevent the loss of species, protecting ecosystems and the services they provide to people including water provision, climate stabilization and pollination. The LPI is produced by ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and is based on almost 35,803 population trends and 5,790 species of vertebrates (amphibians, birds, fish, mammals and reptiles).

Photo: © Neto Ilhabela / CC BY-SA 4.0

Freshwater populations have suffered the strongest declines, followed by terrestrial and marine populations.

Freshwater species are vulnerable to a wide range of threats, with some restricted in range to bodies of water or threatened by dams and other alterations to their habitat that can block migration routes.

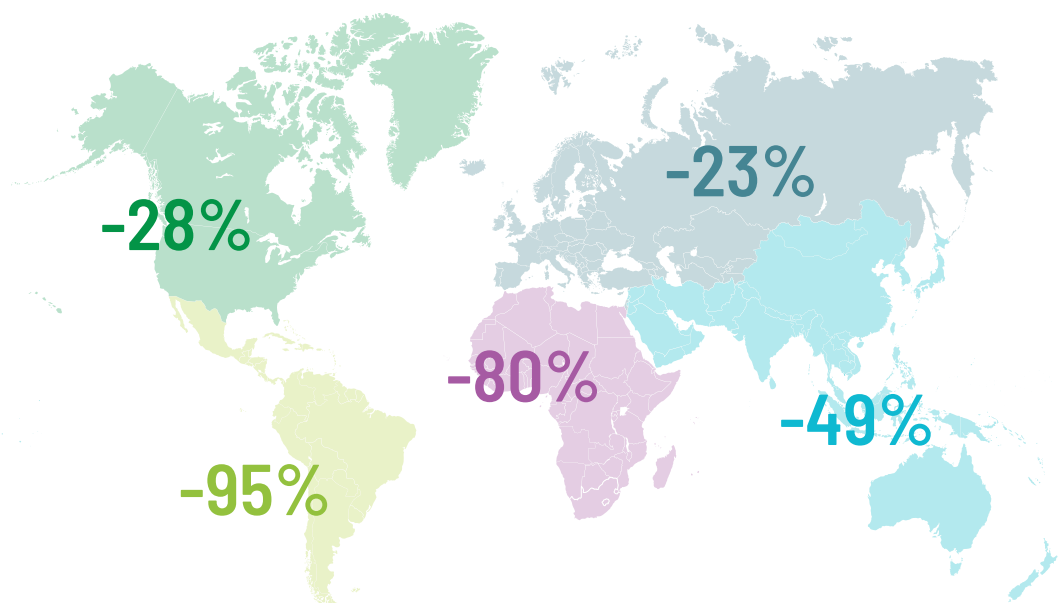


Figure 2 The Living Planet Index by IPBES regions for combined terrestrial and freshwater populations from 1970 to 2022

Trends vary between regions due to different types and levels of pressure placed on nature over the last 50 years. The steepest declines are seen in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and the Pacific. In both Europe and North America large scale impacts on nature had already taken place and biodiversity was in a poorer state by the baseline year of 1970, explaining why there is less of a negative trend.

How is the Living Planet Index calculated?

Monitoring a species over time in a particular area can indicate how the population size of that species in that specific location has changed. The LPI uses these changes in population sizes to establish whether, on average, the relative abundance of monitored vertebrate species has increased, decreased or stayed the same.

To do this, information on changes in abundance is taken from populations from monitored sites around the world, which are included in the LPI database, then averaged together.

The latest LPI shows a decline of 73% (72.9%). This means that the size of these populations fell by, on average, 2.5% between 1970 and 2022. It doesn't mean that there are 73% fewer wild animals in total today than in 1970.

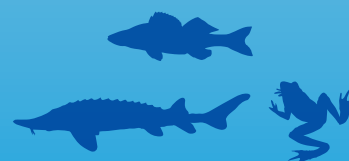
When referring to the LPI, we use the word 'decline' rather than 'loss' as the LPI highlights an average trend in population change and not an average of the total number of individual animals or species lost.

Although the overall trend is negative due to the magnitude of the declining trends, around half (50%) of the populations included in the LPI are stable (7%) or increasing (43%).

The LPI in the 2026 and 2024 reports should not be directly compared as the dataset changes and evolves for each edition. This year's index includes 295 more species and 967 more populations than the last LPI.

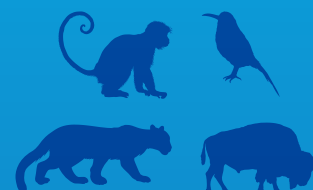
For further information on how the LPI is calculated, please see the LPI 2026 technical report at www.livingplanetindex.org. To find out more about how scientists measure biodiversity trends, visit wwf.panda.org/tracking-nature.

FRESHWATER



-85%

TERRESTRIAL



-62%

MARINE



-59%

The power of hope

Evidence that sustained conservation action works



Photo: © Wild Wonders of Europe / Zankl / WWF

- Populations of Atlantic and Pacific bluefin tuna were collapsing after decades of overfishing. Nations, industry and consumers took action and now neither species is considered overfished or a species of major concern.



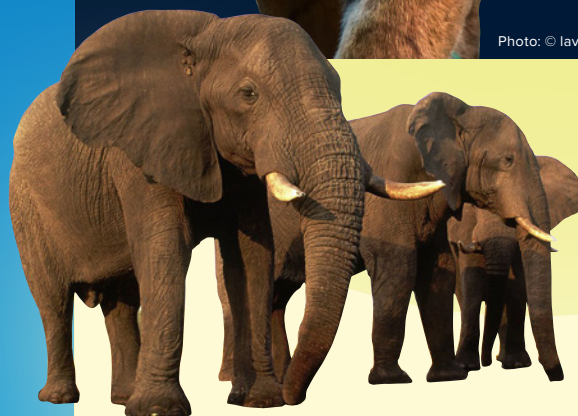
Photo: © Giorgia Doglioni / Unsplash

- In 2025, the green sea turtle became the first marine turtle ever downlisted from Endangered to Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. The recovery reflects 50 years of coordinated work across some 80 nesting countries.



Photo: © lavin photography / iStock

- In 2010, only around 3,200 wild tigers remained, and the species seemed to be sliding toward extinction. By 2025, the population had grown to roughly 5,700, an increase of more than 70%, due to coordinated collective action by governments, communities and other partners.



- African savannah elephants are declining across much of their range and remain Endangered overall. However, there are populations in southern Africa which, in some places, are increasing where local communities lead the management of the land they share with them.

These recoveries took decades. What they had in common was a clear goal, a plan that was open to revision as lessons emerged, the agency to act, and the resilience to keep going when the work became difficult.

Hope is a process

In conservation, hope is a process that keeps people engaged with complex, uncertain challenges over long periods. It has four components. The first is a goal grounded in something a person or community values. The second is a credible pathway to that goal, a plan that can adapt as conditions change and new information becomes available. The third is agency, the belief that the work you do can make a difference. The fourth is resilience, the capacity to keep going when progress stalls and to find new pathways when old ones close.

These four components reinforce one another. When they are reinforced across groups of people, communities, sectors and borders, hope becomes collective. Collective hope is the most reliable predictor we have of whether large-scale change will occur.



Figure 3 More than a feeling, hope becomes a process to drive transformational change when goals, agency and pathways combine. Resilience provides the fortitude to move forward when barriers are encountered.



Energy

Photo: © 一飞黄 / Adobe Stock



Food

Photo: © Reetta Pasanen / WWF



Finance

Photo: © Getty Images / Unsplash

Transforming the systems driving nature loss

Species recoveries matter, but they sit inside a much larger set of forces driving biodiversity loss in the opposite direction, and those forces are bigger than any single species or place.

Three systems are responsible for most of the damage – the energy, food and finance systems.

- **Energy:** Burning coal, oil, and gas to power homes, transport, and industry is the main source of the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, which has now become a driver of biodiversity loss across every ecosystem on Earth.
- **Food:** Agriculture is the single largest cause of habitat loss and degradation, the leading driver of biodiversity decline, a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, and a growing contributor to the rise of diet-related disease.
- **Finance:** Capital allocation – the decisions about which industries receive investment and which do not – determines which activities grow and which shrink. In 2023, around US\$7.3 trillion flowed into activities that harm nature, while only US\$220 billion went toward activities that protect or restore it.

Conservation alone cannot reverse the damage these systems currently cause. But the same hope that drove the recoveries of tigers, tuna, elephants, and sea turtles, grounded in clear goals, credible pathways, agency, and resilience, held by enough people for long enough, can also be directed at the systems themselves.



Photo: © U.S. Department of Agriculture / Public Domain

Positive tipping points

While environmental tipping points are often discussed in the context of risks, such as the collapse of coral reefs or the loss of the Amazon rainforest as a carbon sink, the same dynamics can also drive rapid positive change. A positive tipping point occurs when a system crosses a threshold into a healthier state, and the change begins to reinforce itself through amplifying feedback loops. Once that happens, the change becomes faster, cheaper and harder to reverse. Positive tipping dynamics proceed through three broad phases of change: enabling, accelerating and stabilizing, often illustrated through an S-curve:

- A positive tipping point has been passed in the energy sector. Solar power is now the cheapest source of new electricity generation in most countries while electric vehicles accounted for 24% of new car sales globally in 2024. Despite this momentum, the transition away from fossil fuels is not yet happening fast enough, and progress varies significantly between countries and sectors. Priorities include increased electrification and uptake of renewable energy.
- While the energy system is in an 'accelerating' phase, the food and agriculture system is still at an 'enabling' stage. The priorities are moving towards nature-positive production, promoting sustainable trade and consumption, encouraging healthy and sustainable diets, and reducing food loss and waste.
- The finance system is also at an 'enabling' stage. Here the priorities are stopping the financing of harmful activities, valuing nature and climate as material risks, creating regulatory certainty, and closing a US\$942 billion biodiversity finance gap.

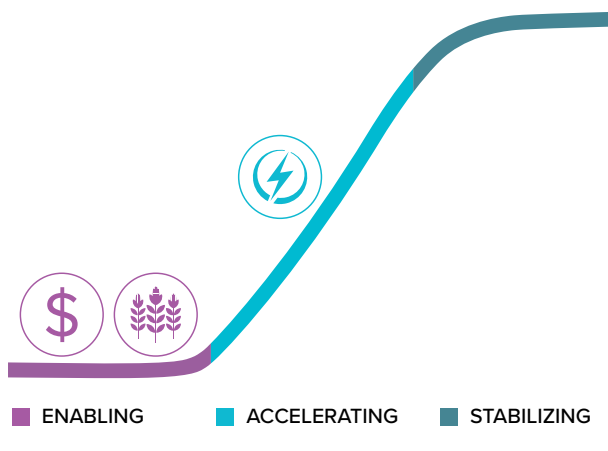


Figure 4 The phases of tipping dynamics, or the S-curve: Along the S-curve, positive tipping dynamics proceed through three broad phases of change: enabling, accelerating and stabilizing. Energy is in the accelerating phase, while food and finance are in the enabling phase.

Large, complex systems can be resistant to change but none of this requires technology that does not exist. It requires decisions and the persistence to keep making them through the slow stretches when the results are not yet visible. It takes resilience, a willingness to adjust and the determination to keep going. Transforming long-established systems will only be successful if the transition is fair, equitable and inclusive, involving the whole of society.

Aligning and accelerating global action

Systemic shifts can be achieved if countries focus on delivering the goals they have agreed to under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Paris Agreement on climate change. With UN conferences on biodiversity and climate taking place soon, governments have a vital opportunity to put nature and the climate on the path to recovery by 2030.

Both biodiversity COP17 and climate change COP31 should focus on accelerating the implementation of existing 2030 commitments and prioritize those capable of triggering positive tipping points. This includes scaling up renewable energy deployment, eliminating harmful subsidies, halting deforestation, restoring ecosystems and accelerating food systems transformation.

Coming up

- **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP17**
Yerevan, Armenia, 19–30
October 2026
- **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP31**
Antalya, Türkiye, 9–20
November 2026

Achieving these goals will require a fundamental transformation – from extractive, wasteful economies that drive nature loss to systems that are sustainable, regenerative and based on long-term stewardship of nature for the benefit of all.

Change on this scale will depend on effective cooperation across society, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, cities and subnational governments, businesses and financial institutions, civil society organizations and others. The goals and pathways exist, and, with collective hope, change is within reach.

“The goal of a world in harmony with nature is one worth achieving. We have credible pathways to get there and, in different ways, each one of us has agency. Transformation, through positive tipping points, can happen more rapidly than we think. Seemingly against the odds, we have a rational basis for hope.”

—WWF Living Planet Report 2026 – The Science of Hope

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