

IF NOT  
NOW,  
WHEN?  
There is no PLANET B

**CLIMATE CHANGE:**  
OUR WILDLIFE NEEDS YOUR  
HELP



# WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns.<sup>7</sup>

The Earth's climate has been changing throughout its history, but the current warming is happening at a rate not seen in 10,000 years.<sup>5</sup> It is an ongoing issue that many scientists are dedicating their lives to.

It's a topic many want to look away from. Some may even doubt its existence, but the Earth is proving otherwise.

## What Causes Climate Change?

Humans are responsible. Primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels. Burning fossil fuels is used to generate power, as most electricity is produced by burning coal, oil, and gas.

The United Nations describes burning fossil fuel as this: it generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.<sup>6</sup>

Deforestation is a large contributor to climate change since carbon is released from trees when they are cut. Every year, around 12 million hectares of forests are destroyed. Since forests play a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide, their destruction limits nature's ability to reduce emissions in the atmosphere. Deforestation, agricultural expansion, and other changes in land use account for roughly a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>10</sup>



Most cars, trucks, ships, and planes run on fossil fuels. 91% of Americans commuting to work use personal vehicles. The U.S. daily travel averages 11 billion miles a day.<sup>11</sup> Road vehicles account for the largest part due to the combustion of petroleum-based products, like gasoline, in internal combustion engines.<sup>7</sup>

We contribute to climate change without realizing it, as our societies revolve around practices that harm the planet. It is humankind who has caused these issues.

And we need to remember that we share the Earth with other species.

# WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH WILDLIFE?

## An Overview



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Around one million of the Earth's animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction. Projections suggest that if global temperatures increase by two °C by 2100, about 18% of all species on land will face a high risk of extinction.<sup>2</sup>

Even with a year as far away as 2100, scientists are trying to keep the climate change conversation going. Humankind is the cause of climate change, and our animals are paying the price.

Some animals listed below are among the most negatively affected by rising sea temperatures, melting ice, and changing weather patterns caused by climate change—and some have already gone extinct: golden toads, corals, Chinook salmon, green sea turtles, polar bears, adélie penguins, bumblebees, whales, and sharks.<sup>2</sup>

## Food Loss

The animals dying off due to climate change are already affecting our food systems. But predators are in trouble since their food is disappearing.

In a 2014-2016 study, over a million common murrelets, a type of seabird, representing about 15% of their population, died due to a marine heat wave known as the "Warm Blob," which spanned from Alaska to California. The Warm Blob caused chaos in California's ordinarily cold, highly productive waters, causing fish such as anchovies, sardines, sand lance, squids, and krill to move to deeper, colder waters and be less available in other ways. This led to the birds suffering from the lack of food.<sup>1</sup>

## Habitat Degredation

Habitat loss comes in different forms. It could come from destruction or fragmentation. Habitat degradation, however, is a result of climate change.<sup>8</sup>

Climate change has brought pollution to these habitats. Freshwater wildlife is most impacted by pollution. Pollutants such as untreated sewage, mining waste, acid rain, fertilizers, and pesticides concentrate in rivers, lakes and wetlands and eventually end up in estuaries and the food web.<sup>8</sup>



© Tiredearth

Wildlife that need the cool temperatures of high elevations, such as the American pika, may soon run out of habitat. Coastal wildlife may find their habitat underwater as sea levels rise.<sup>8</sup>

## Rising Temperatures



© National Wildlife Federation

The rising temperatures brought on by climate change heavily impact habitats in dry areas.

Warmer temperatures and reduced precipitation across the western US have increased the size of wildfires and worsened insect and disease outbreaks, causing a decrease in habitat for woodland creatures.<sup>4</sup>

Wildfires caused by droughts are destroying habitats. Not only do animals get lost in the wildfires, but their homes and food are also gone in the process.

With fires contributing to lost habitats, forests are also destroyed directly by human hands. A large reason is conversion to farmlands. Large-scale crops like cattle ranching or growing soybeans and oil palm require huge areas of agricultural land. Fuel wood and firewood are used for cooking and heating around the world, and timber is used for building houses, furniture, and paper products.<sup>12</sup>

# HOW IS CLIMATE CHANGE HANDLED TODAY?

## The Endangered Species Act

This act was passed in 1973 in response to the countless species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the U.S. that have gone with the hopes of preventing further extinction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service implements it.<sup>9</sup>

The law requires federal agencies, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries, to ensure that any actions they approve, fund, or execute do not threaten the survival of listed species or damage designated critical habitats. The law also prohibits actions that result in the "taking" of endangered fish or wildlife species.<sup>9</sup>

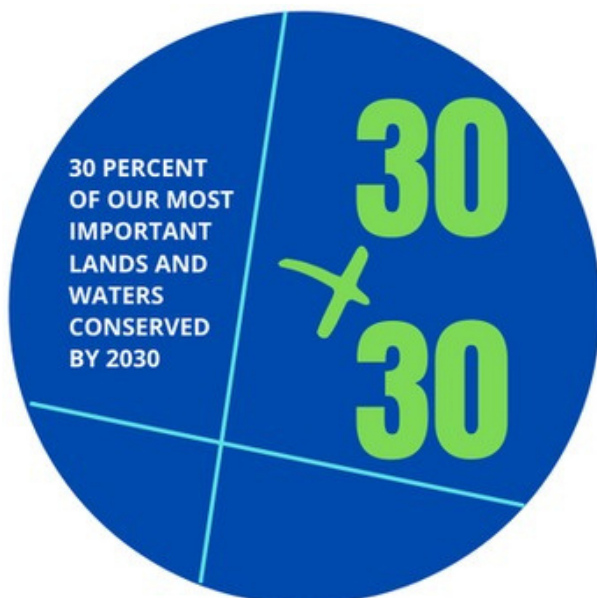
This act has resulted in the successful recovery of animals that were endangered. The ESA is credited with saving 99% of listed species from extinction, with credit given to the collaboration between federal agencies, state, local, and Tribal governments, conservation organizations, and private citizens.<sup>10</sup>

The ESA remains in place today, but it is in danger under the current Trump-Vance administration, with regulatory changes proposed to weaken the act in an executive order in January 2025.

## 30 by 30 Act

President Biden introduced the 30 by 30 Act in March 2023. The goal is to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

The Biden-Harris Administration announced a series of new steps to conserve, restore, and expand access to lands and waters across the country. These include a proposal to modernize the management of America's public lands, a plan to harness the power of the ocean to fight the climate crisis, a strategy to conserve wildlife corridors better, and new funding to improve access to outdoor recreation, promote Tribal conservation, reduce wildfire risk, and more.<sup>3</sup>



© IUCN World Conservation Congress

# WHAT COULD BE DONE?

This country has made its own contributions to helping wildlife, and it's a start. Past successes prove it's possible to help endangered animals with federal funding and attention. As of current, the ESA seems to stand and hopefully will remain so. However, for the acts to continue and prosper, we need to shine more light on these issues. The conversation on climate change needs to continue, but it should include wildlife.

## Wildlife for All's Recommended Actions



- Help towards wildlife is not only on a national level, but also at a state level, so get informed on your state's wildlife governance at: <https://wildlifeforall.us/resources/find-your-state/>
- Supporting wildlife organizations, such as Wildlife for All, helps you stay informed about wildlife management reform efforts nationwide.

## Everyday Actions

These are recommendations by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on how to get involved.<sup>11</sup>

- Get involved on social media.
- Plant native grasses, trees, and shrubs that absorb carbon dioxide.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Purchase recycled or up-cycled products if possible.
- Be mindful of water use.
- Turn off electronics when not in use.
- Use reusable bags and water bottles.
- Look around your community. Identify natural spaces that need help being restored or protected.
- Clean up garbage.
- Stay informed.



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