

10 Minutes For The Planet

A million species being destroyed by one©

by Sarah Heath and Catherine Balter-Kendall

Stressed syllables are underlined and in **bold**.*

Hello! I'm Sarah Heath and you're listening to 10 Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

If **latent** observers living through these **ominous environmental** times needed yet another **wake-up call** to the state of the planet, surely the latest news to come out of the United Nations will awaken their impulse to act?

Just the summary of this new report is enough to **make your toes curl**. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has stated – without any preconceived intention of **scaremongering** or **exaggerating** – that the human race is the major force behind the threatened, and imminent, extinction of over a million plant and animal species. That's a full seven-figure number of species which will soon **die out**. Forever.

The **full findings** of this extensive research will **be released** in the coming months but the **foreshock** of what will be learnt in the 1,500-page report has already had some world leaders, including President Macron, jumping to attention.

The study includes information **sourced** from 15,000 government and **scientific** departments in 50 countries worldwide, work which has been **undertaken** by 145 scientists and researchers but has also **incorporated information** from **indigenous communities**, many of whom have a **far-better** understanding of – and **reliance** on – the workings of the natural world than people living in western societies.

According to scientists, planet earth is currently going through its sixth mass extinction phase, a very natural **phenomenon** but which differs **vastly** from its **predecessors**:



latent (adj.) yet to manifest

ominous (adj.) threatening, menacing

wake-up call (exp.) sth. that alerts a person to a problem or danger and the need to take action

to make your toes curl (exp.) to bring about an extreme reaction

scaremongering (n.) spreading ominous reports with the intention of frightening people

to die out (phrasal vb.) to disappear

full findings (exp.) complete results

to be released (vb.) to be announced

foreshock (n.) a small shock before a much larger one

to source (vb.) to come from, to originate from

to undertake (vb.) to do, to carry out

far-better (exp.) much better

reliance (n.) dependence

vastly (adv.) greatly

this one is man-made. Not asteroids or volcanoes but human beings. This current extinction rate is **estimated** to be between 1,000 to 10,000 times that of what is considered the usual 'background rate' of extinctions of between one to five species each year.

Among the key **accelerators** to the dying out of plants and animals are **habitat loss**, **overfishing**, climate change, pollution and invasive species destroying areas which are unable to sustain their presence in a delicate **ecosystem**.

There are **roughly** 8 million known species on our planet. It is believed that 12.5% are under threat of dying out. Those most in danger are 10% of insects, 33% of marine mammals and corals, and 40% of **amphibians**. Forests which are home to half the world's animals, some possibly still yet undiscovered, have been **decimated**: between 1980 and the year 2000, over 100 million hectares of forest have been destroyed mostly for **agricultural purposes** – **cattle** farming and palm oil production being the major **culprits**. Industrial fishing is **wiping out** fish stocks and the last hundred years has seen over half of the world's coral reefs dying.

Human activity accounts for 75% of total land mass being **altered** in some way, a third of it for **agriculture**. Urban areas are growing at **frightening** speed to **keep up with** the additional 1 billion people adding to the world population every 13 years.

Species which became extinct in 2018 include three types of bird: the Po'ouli, a songbird native to Hawaii which was wiped out when non-indigenous animals were introduced to its natural habitat; the Alagoas Foliage Gleaner lived in Brazil's rainforest until **deforestation** wiped it out; another **Brazilian** native, the Spix's Macaw became extinct in the wild last year, although a small number do remain in **captivity**.

And the **dismal** predictions for this year? The world's rarest marine mammal, the Vaquita Porpoise will certainly die out in the very-near future. Living in the Gulf of California, there are believed to be fewer than 30 left in the wild, their **demise** largely **brought about** by being **drowned** in illegal fishing nets.

The Northern White Rhino has just two females left in existence after the last male died last year. Despite desperate measures by **conservation** groups, **poaching** for rhino-horn has **obliterated** rhino **populations** within the past decades and now it is just a matter of time.....

habitat loss (exp.) the destruction of the environment where a species live

overfishing (n.) excessive catching of fish, which depletes the stock

roughly (adv.) about, approximately

purpose (n.) reason for which sth. exists

cattle (n.) cows

culprit (n.) person or thing responsible for crime or sth. negative

to wipe out (phrasal vb.) to eradicate

to alter (vb.) to change, to modify

frightening (adj.) alarming, scary

to keep up with (phrasal vb.) to move or progress at the same rate as

dismal (adj.) depressing

demise (n.) death, end

to bring about (phrasal vb.) to cause

to drown (vb.) to die through submersion in water

poaching (n.) to kill animals illegally

How bad does it need to be for the world to pay more attention? The chairman of the UN research group who compiled this **damning** report, Sir Robert Watson, said: “We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, **livelihoods**, food security, health, and quality of life worldwide”.

Education surely has to be the key when it appears even some world leaders with access to the best **information are in denial** of the obvious and the man on the street doesn't even have a **grasp** on the basics. A chat show in the United States **carried out** a short and informal, but very-**telling, survey** asking American **passers-by** whether the Homo sapiens species should be saved. Most had no idea that Homo sapiens is the Latin term for human beings. Many respondents believed other **issues** should be focused on before saving...our own race! One woman went as far as saying, “Let the Homo sapiens die! Save the humans”! Ironic that the literal translation of Homo sapiens is “**Wise Man**”. Are we really?

A quote from the Cree Indian tribe in Northern America **puts it** most succinctly: “Only when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish been caught, and the last stream poisoned, will we realize we cannot eat money.”

Tune in next week for more stories on the environment, here on English Waves.

damning (adj.) critical, incriminating

livelihood (n.) means of support

to be in denial (exp.) to refuse to accept a reality as being true because it's unpleasant or inconvenient

grasp (n.) understanding

to carry out a survey (exp.) to ask people questions in order to establish public opinion on a subject

telling (adj.) revealing, informative

passers-by (n.) random people passing in the street

issue (n.) problem

wise (adj.) intelligent

to out it (exp.) to express sth.

***Tip!**

The main stress in a word may change in its different forms:

we say **environment** but **environmental**

we say **agriculture** but **agricultural**

words ending in -ion and -ian have their main stress on the penultimate (last but one) syllable:

information, amphibian, deforestation, Brazilian, conservation, populations, education