

1 million species under extinction

- The Global Ecosystem Assessment by Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services shows the current rate and scale of extinction, caused majorly by humans.
- Since the beginning of the last century (1900), availability of native species in most of the land-based habitats has declined by 20 per cent.
- The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is termed as the first-ever such comprehensive report.
- It took three years for a group of 145 expert authors from 50 countries to prepare this report based on more than 15,000 scientific and government documents.

Key Facts:

- The report found that 25 percent of mammals, more than 40 percent of amphibian species, nearly 33 percent of sharks and 25 percent of plant groups are threatened with extinction.
- Based on these proportions, the researchers estimated that approximately 1 million animal and plant species could die out, many “within decades.”
- Their landmark report paints a bleak picture of a planet ravaged by an ever-growing human population, whose insatiable consumption is destroying the natural world.
- The report comes six months after the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the world has less than 12 years to avoid catastrophic levels of global warming.
- The report emphasizes the effects humans have on animals that are key to their own survival.
- Pesticides sprayed by farmers kill pollinators such as bees and other insects will likely to have a devastating effect on crops.
- Homeowners contribute to the problem by purchasing “bug zappers” that target mosquitoes but also eliminate key

pollinators such as butterflies and moths, as well as common flies that some animals rely on for food.

- Since the 16th century, humans have driven at least 680 vertebrate species to extinction, including the Pinta Island tortoise.

Other details from the report:

- More than 500,000 of the world's estimated 5.9 million terrestrial species do not have adequate habitats for long term survival without habitat restoration.
- More than 40% of the planet's amphibian species are threatened with extinction.
- A third of reef forming corals, sharks and shark relatives and a third marine mammals are threatened with extinction.
- At least 680 vertebrate species have driven to extinction by human actions since the 1500s.
- About 560 domesticated breeds of mammals were extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more threatened.
- A third of marine fish stocks were being harvested at unsustainable levels in 2015.
- Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, 300 to 400 tons of industrial waste is dumped into the world's waters annually, and fertilizers have created more than 400 ocean "dead zones," totaling more than 95,000 square miles.

Rapid Deterioration:

- Extinctions have occurred throughout the planet's history, but the report found that human actions threaten more species now than ever before, with the global rate of species extinction over the past 50 years already "at least tens to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years."

Concluding Remarks:

- According to some expert's opinion, this could have serious consequences for the stability of ecosystems around the world, which in turn could directly affect human health.
- The interactions between animals, plants, humans and the environment make up a complex web.
- Disruptions to any part of this biological architecture can have significant, cascading effects.

Source: DTE,NBC