

## Biodiversity

**Biodiversity is in rapid decline throughout the U.S. and North America.**

- Over the last 50 years, [wildlife populations have declined](#) by an average of 20% in North America.<sup>1</sup>
- There are [3 billion fewer birds](#) in North America than there were in 1970 (a 30% decline); birds are on track to decline by another 50% by 2070.<sup>2</sup>
- [Butterfly populations](#) have declined by 22% over the last 20 years in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>
- 487 animal species and 764 plant species are listed as [endangered](#) in the U.S.; and
- 244 animal species and 174 plant species are listed as threatened.<sup>4</sup>

That's over a thousand species, some of which have inhabited the earth for millions of years, facing the threat of being extinguished — in our country and under our watch.

**Habitat loss is the single [greatest threat](#) to biodiversity and ecosystems, even more than climate change.<sup>5</sup>**

- The United States loses roughly a football field of nature [every 30 seconds](#) (about 1.5 million acres every year).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WWF (2022) Living Planet Report 2022 – Building a naturepositive society. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. & Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

[https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/embargo\\_13\\_10\\_2022\\_lpr\\_2022\\_full\\_report\\_single\\_page\\_1.pdf](https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/embargo_13_10_2022_lpr_2022_full_report_single_page_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth V. Rosenberg et al. 2019. Decline of the North American Avifauna. Science, 04 Oct 2019, Vol. 366, Issue 6461, pp. 120-124. DOI: 10.1126/science.aaw1313; Carl Zimmer. 2019. Birds Are Vanishing From North America. New York Times. Available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/science/bird-populations-america-canada.html>

North American Bird Conservation Initiative. 2022. The State of the Birds, United States of America, 2022.

[StateoftheBirds.org](http://StateoftheBirds.org)

<sup>3</sup> Collin B. Edwards et al. ,Rapid butterfly declines across the United States during the 21st century.Science387,1090-1094(2025).DOI:[10.1126/science.adp4671](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adp4671)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ECOS Environmental Conservation Online System, Summary of Listed Species Listed Populations and Recovery Plans as of Tue, 14 May 2024. <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/boxscore>

<sup>5</sup>WWF. 2018. Living Planet Report - 2018: Aiming Higher. Grooten, M. and Almond, R.E.A.(Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland. [https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1187/files/original/LPR2018\\_Full\\_Report\\_Spreads.pdf](https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1187/files/original/LPR2018_Full_Report_Spreads.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> David M. Theobald and others, "Loss and fragmentation of natural lands in the coterminous U.S. from 2001 to 2017" (Truckee, CA: Conservation Science Partners, 2019), available at <https://www.csp-inc.org/public/CSP%20Disappearing%20US%20Exec%20Summary%20011819.pdf>.

Updated: September, 2025

- "[H]abitat fragmentation is now so severe that a pin dropped at random on a map of the contiguous United States can be expected to land less than half a mile from human development." - [Center For American Progress](#)

Population growth is the [main driver](#) of [habitat loss](#)<sup>7</sup> in the U.S. and globally.<sup>8</sup>

- Population growth is a [primary driver](#) of habitat loss.<sup>9</sup>
- [60% of sprawl](#) in the U.S. (1982-2017) has been a result of population growth. States with rapidly growing populations have higher rates of loss than states with slowly growing populations.<sup>10</sup>
- High population areas experience increased numbers of [invasive plant and fish species](#)<sup>11</sup>
- Local extinction rates of large mammals [inside national parks](#) increases along with population density outside park boundaries.<sup>12</sup> [Housing growth](#)<sup>13</sup> is the main threat to [protected areas](#).<sup>14</sup>
- Immigration is the [primary driver](#) of population growth in the United States<sup>15</sup>, the third-most populous country on Earth behind India and China.

There are many factors that contribute to loss of habitat and biodiversity, and many ways to **mitigate** the losses without addressing immigration policy. Given immigration's outsized role in U.S. population growth, however, there is no way to **prevent** habitat and biodiversity loss without addressing federal immigration policy.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cafaro, Hansson & Götmarm, "A Bibliography of Recent Scientific Work on Population and Biodiversity Conservation," The Overpopulation Project. <https://overpopulation-project.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Cafaro-et-al.-Bibliography-of-recent-scientific-work-on-population-and-biodiversity-conservation-2023.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Dave Foreman with Laura Carroll, *Man Swarm: How Overpopulation is Killing The Wild World*, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> WWF (n 4)

<sup>10</sup> Leon Kolankiewicz with Roy Beck and Eric Ruark, *From Sea To Sprawling Sea*, p 117, 2022. <https://sprawlusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NatlSprawl.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Michael L. McKinney, Effects of human population, area, and time on non-native plant and fish diversity in the United States, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 100, Issue 2, 2001, Pages 243-252 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320701000271?via%3Dihub#preview-section-cited-by>

<sup>12</sup> S.A. Parks and A.H. Harcourt, Reserve Size, Local Density, and Mammalian Extinctions in U.S. Protected Areas, *Conservation Biology*, pages 800-808, Volume 16, No. 3, June 2002. <http://winapps.umn.edu/winapps/media2/leopold/pubs/724.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Radeloff VC, et. al. Housing growth in and near United States protected areas limits their conservation value. *Proc Natl Acad Sci*, 2010. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818924/>

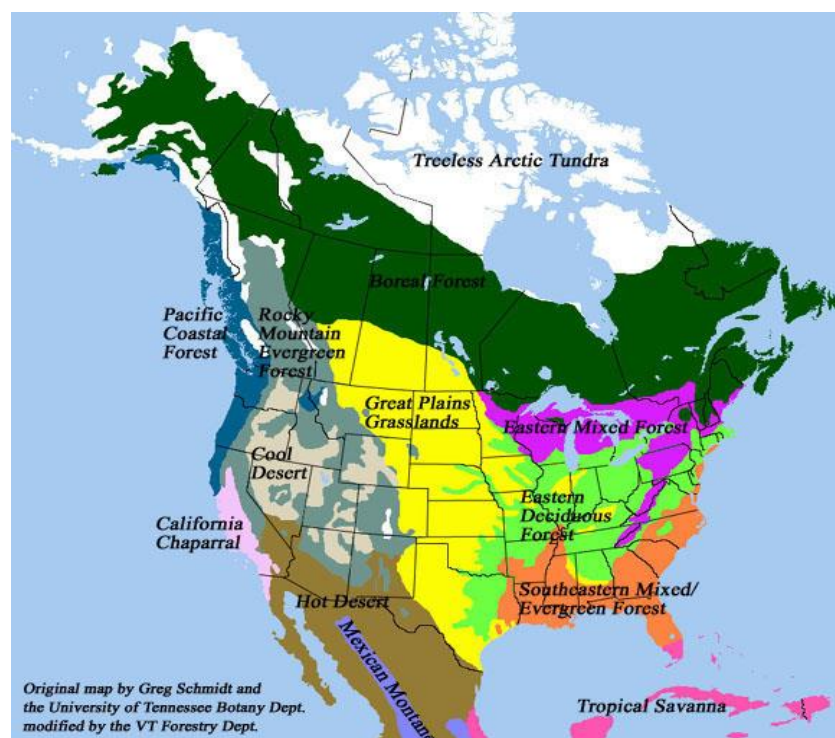
<sup>14</sup> Alisa A. Wade, David Theobald. Residential Development Encroachment on US Protected Areas, *Conservation Biology*, 2009. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26688025\\_Residential\\_Development\\_Encroachment\\_on\\_US\\_Protected\\_Areas](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26688025_Residential_Development_Encroachment_on_US_Protected_Areas)

<sup>15</sup> Sandra Johnson, A Changing Nation: Population Projections Under Alternative Immigration Scenarios, Current Population Reports, U.S. Census, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1146.pdf>

**Every nation has a right and a responsibility to the international community to conserve nature within its own boundaries. Immigration policy should reflect that responsibility.**

The United States is still one of the [most biodiverse](#) nations in the world.<sup>16</sup> Of the remaining intact global areas [identified](#) as necessary to reverse further biodiversity loss and enhance natural carbon removal<sup>17</sup>, 75% are within just [six countries](#), including the United States<sup>18</sup>.

"Within the biomes and landscapes threatened by sprawl are found some of our most critical natural habitats. According to the World Wildlife Fund, habitat loss poses the single greatest threat to endangered species around the world. The United States is home to approximately 1,660 species and subspecies of plants and animals formally listed as federally endangered or threatened by the federal government (specifically, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service). Most of these are seriously harmed by ever-expanding sprawl and ever-encroaching development of one form or another that modifies, degrades, or eliminates the habitats they need to survive." - [From Sea to Sprawling Sea](#)



<sup>16</sup> Holsinger, Kent E., 2001. Biodiversity in the United States. *BioScience*, Volume 51, Issue 3, March 2001, Pages 256--257. [https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568\(2001\)051\[0256:BITUS\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2001)051[0256:BITUS]2.0.CO;2)

<sup>17</sup> E. Dinerstein et al. „A "Global Safety Net" to reverse biodiversity loss and stabilize Earth's climate.*Sci. Adv.*6,eabb2824(2020).DOI:10.1126/sciadv.abb2824

<sup>18</sup> Technical Summary of the Global Safety Net, 2020. A Global Safety Net For Saving Life. Nature Needs Half. <https://natureneedshalf.org/2020/09/7130/>