

U.N. biodiversity report reveals world has far to go

By Newsela staff on 12.01.20

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Image 1. Coral reefs are one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet. About one-quarter of marine life relies on them for food and shelter. Pollution and rising ocean temperatures are causing coral reefs around the world to die. This coral reef is in West Papua, Indonesia. Photo: Reinhard Dirscherlullstein bild via Getty Images

Earth has about 1 trillion types of plants and animals. That is a lot. It means our planet has a lot of biodiversity, or a lot of different kinds of living things.

Humans cut down trees and plants for food. We make pollution. That hurts biodiversity.

In 2010, the United Nations (U.N.) made goals to help biodiversity. They reviewed the goals in September 2020. Many of the goals have not been met. But some things are getting better.

The Importance Of Biodiversity

Biodiversity keeps living things in an ecosystem healthy. Coral reefs are one example. They are very biodiverse. Yet they cover only a small part of ocean floor. But one-quarter of sea life need them for shelter and food. Humans need coral reefs too. They protect coasts from storms. They are a source of food and new medicines.

Wetlands are also biodiverse. Many types of plants and animals live there. Wetlands protect coasts from hurricanes and storms. They block the wind and water flow.

But humans are hurting biodiversity. One example is climate change. This is the change in the climate of the Earth over a long period of time. Climate change can happen naturally or in response to human activities. Climate change warms oceans and melts ice.

Humans burn fuels like gasoline. They cut down forests. Pollution helps kill coral reefs. So does the warming ocean. Humans build houses and roads over wetlands.



Many Goals Have Not Been Met

Most of the U.N.'s goals have not been met. Some things have gotten worse. There is more farming than before. Farmland now covers 40 percent of land. Farming takes away native plants. Native animals lose their homes and food. We keep using pesticides and fertilizers. These are chemicals. They create pollution. And they hurt nearby living things.

Reasons For Hope

We have made some things better. We cut down forests more slowly. Governments now spend more money on protecting biodiversity.

There are things you can do to help. Spend time outside and learn about where you live. Learn about the plants and animals that live there. Plant native trees. Create a garden. Pick up garbage. These all help the environment. You could even plan a career helping to protect biodiversity.

Quiz

- 1 Where does one-quarter of all sea life live?
- (A) the Earth
 - (B) coral reefs
 - (C) wetlands
 - (D) forests
- 2 Which sentence from the section "The Importance Of Biodiversity" explains WHY biodiversity is good?
- (A) Biodiversity keeps living things in an ecosystem healthy.
 - (B) Many types of plants and animals live there.
 - (C) But humans are hurting biodiversity.
 - (D) Pollution helps kill coral reefs.
- 3 What is the section "Reasons For Hope" MAINLY about?
- (A) which United Nations biodiversity goals have not been met
 - (B) the kinds of animals that live in coral reefs
 - (C) ways that people can help to improve biodiversity
 - (D) how many different plants and animals live on Earth
- 4 What is the article MAINLY about?
- (A) ways in which humans hurt biodiversity
 - (B) why biodiversity is important
 - (C) why the United Nations set biodiversity goals
 - (D) ways in which humans cause climate change