

Living Planet Report on Africa

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in news?

Africa's monitored wildlife populations declined by an average of 80% between 1970 and 2022, highlighting the scale of biodiversity loss across the continent, according to a new report released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

- **Living Planet Report 2026** - It tracks 35,803 populations representing 5,790 vertebrate species between 1970 and 2022.

Key Findings

- **Sharp decline** - Africa's monitored wildlife populations declined by an average of 80% between 1970 and 2022, which is equivalent to 3.1% per year.
- The figure is an average change in population size, not a count of animals lost.
- Trends were negative across all major animal groups, with monitored freshwater fish among the most severely affected.
- However, WWF noted that information on freshwater ecosystems in Africa remains limited, underscoring the need for expanded research and targeted conservation.
- **Causes of wildlife decline** -
 - Habitat loss, driven largely by agricultural expansion
 - Overexploitation and climate change.
 - Invasive species
 - Pollution can directly damage ecosystems or indirectly reduce food availability and reproductive success.
 - Disease, particularly due to climate change and habitat degradation, can make species more vulnerable to infections.
- Habitat loss, overexploitation and climate change together account for 67% of biodiversity loss across terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems.
- **Signs of recovery** - Despite the alarming trends, WWF points to successful conservation efforts as evidence that wildlife decline is not inevitable.
- **Community-based natural resource management** - It gives local people rights and responsibilities over wildlife while allowing them to benefit from sustainable stewardship.
- These efforts, combined with anti-trafficking measures, judicial reforms and efforts to reduce corruption, have helped some elephant populations recover.
 - Example - Southern African elephant populations are stable or increasing in several areas where local communities play a central role in managing wildlife

and land.

- **Challenges remain** - However, WWF cautions that these gains remain fragile and can bring new challenges, including human-wildlife conflict and habitat degradation.
- **Transforming sectors that drive biodiversity loss** - The report argues that conservation alone cannot reverse the broader forces driving biodiversity loss.
- **Three systems** — energy, food and agriculture, and finance — are central to the crisis.
- Transforming these systems is therefore essential. In 2023, around \$7.3 trillion flowed into activities harmful to nature, compared with only \$220 billion for protecting and restoring it.
- **Positive tipping points for transformation**
- **Positive tipping point** - A stage at which beneficial change becomes self-sustaining and difficult to reverse.
- **Energy sector** - Solar power is now the cheapest source of new electricity generation in most countries.
- **Food and agriculture sector** - Growing focus towards nature-positive production, promoting sustainable trade and consumption, encouraging healthy and sustainable diets, and reducing food loss and waste.
- **Finance system** - Needs to work rapidly towards stopping the financing of harmful activities, valuing nature and climate as material risks, creating regulatory certainty and closing an annual \$1.3 trillion biodiversity financing gap.

Reference

[Down to Earth | WWF report on Africa](#)