Living Planet Report 2014
Media Summary
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The *Living Planet Report 2014* is the tenth edition of WWF's biennial flagship publication. With the theme *Species and Spaces, People and Places*, the report summarizes the state of Earth's natural systems by measuring wildlife populations and humanity's footprint.

The primary finding of the *Living Planet Report 2014* is that critical wildlife populations are declining as Ecological Footprint continues its rise. The result is increasing demand on dwindling natural resources by a growing global population. However, at the same time that the picture of the Earth's natural health trends downward, opportunities exist to reverse these trends through positive action by governments, businesses, individuals and civil society. The main challenge represented in the report is the need to delink the rise in human development from unsustainable demand on the globe's natural systems.

Living Planet Report 2014 features updated methodology that provides a more complete understanding of critical wildlife populations around the world. The revised methodology provides a higher resolution snapshot of our natural environment, resulting in a much worse picture of the status of Earth's natural systems than in previous reports. The results also put finer focus on available solutions and point us toward actions that can reverse current trends.

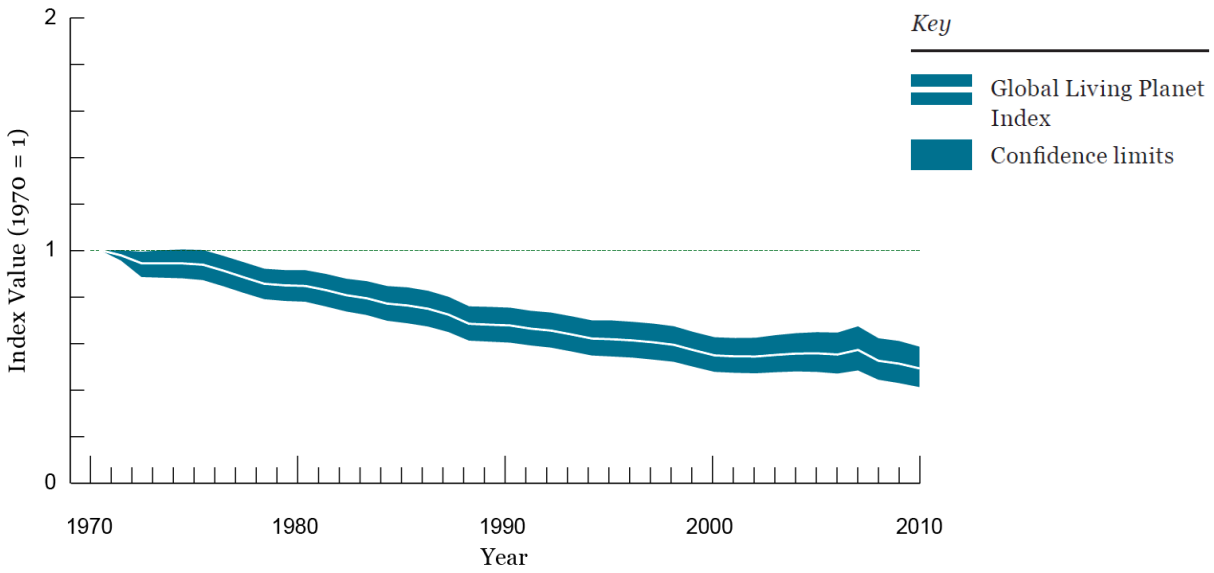
In this summary:

Biodiversity

The state of the world's biodiversity appears worse than ever. The Living Planet Index, a measure of trends in over 10,000 wildlife populations, shows a decline of 52 per cent between 1970 and 2010. In other words, the number of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish across the globe is, on average, about half the size it was 40 years ago. This is a much bigger decrease than has been reported previously. The difference is largely a result of improved methodology that is more representative of the geographic spread of global biodiversity.

Wildlife populations are declining in all regions of the Earth, but the loss is greatest in the tropics. Latin America shows the most dramatic decline – a fall of 83 per cent. The combined measures of habitat loss and degradation present the greatest threat to wildlife populations. Exploitation through hunting and fishing intentionally for food or sport, or accidentally, for example, as bycatch, is also major global threat. Climate change is the next most common threat, and is likely to put more pressure on populations in the future. Freshwater species are the hardest hit and show an average decline of 76 per cent. Marine species declined 39 per cent between 1970 and 2010. Terrestrial species declined by 39 per cent between in the same reporting period.

Figure 1 - Living Planet Index (Source: WWF, ZSL, 2014)

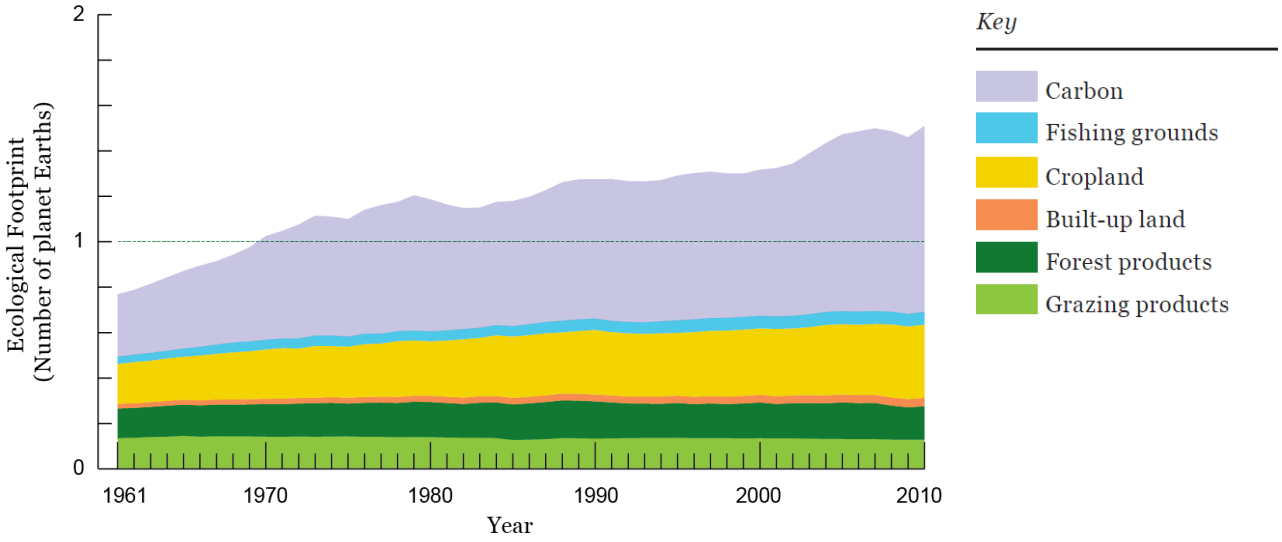


The Living Planet Index is provided by The Zoological Society of London.

Ecological Footprint

Humanity's Ecological Footprint continues its rise. Ecological Footprint is a measure of humanity's demands on nature. The *Living Planet Report 2014* finds that human consumption exceeds the area available to produce renewable resources and absorb carbon dioxide by 50 per cent. The world currently needs the capacity of 1.5 Earths to provide the ecological services that we use each year. This "overshoot" is possible because – for now – we can cut trees faster than they mature, harvest more fish than the oceans can replenish, or emit more carbon into the atmosphere than the forests and oceans can absorb. The sum of all human demands no longer fits within what nature can renew. The consequences are diminished resource stocks and waste accumulating faster than it can be absorbed or recycled, such as with the growing carbon concentration in the atmosphere.

Figure 2 -Global Ecological Footprint by component Source: Global Footprint Network, 2014)



The measure of Ecological Footprint is provided by the Global Footprint Network.

Who has the largest footprint?

There are enormous differences between the Ecological Footprints of countries, particularly those at different economic levels and levels of development. High-income countries have a per capita Ecological Footprint on average five times that of low-income countries. The ten countries with the largest Ecological Footprint per person are: Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Denmark, Belgium, Trinidad and Tobago, Singapore, United States of America, Bahrain and Sweden.

Unequal demands, unequal consequences

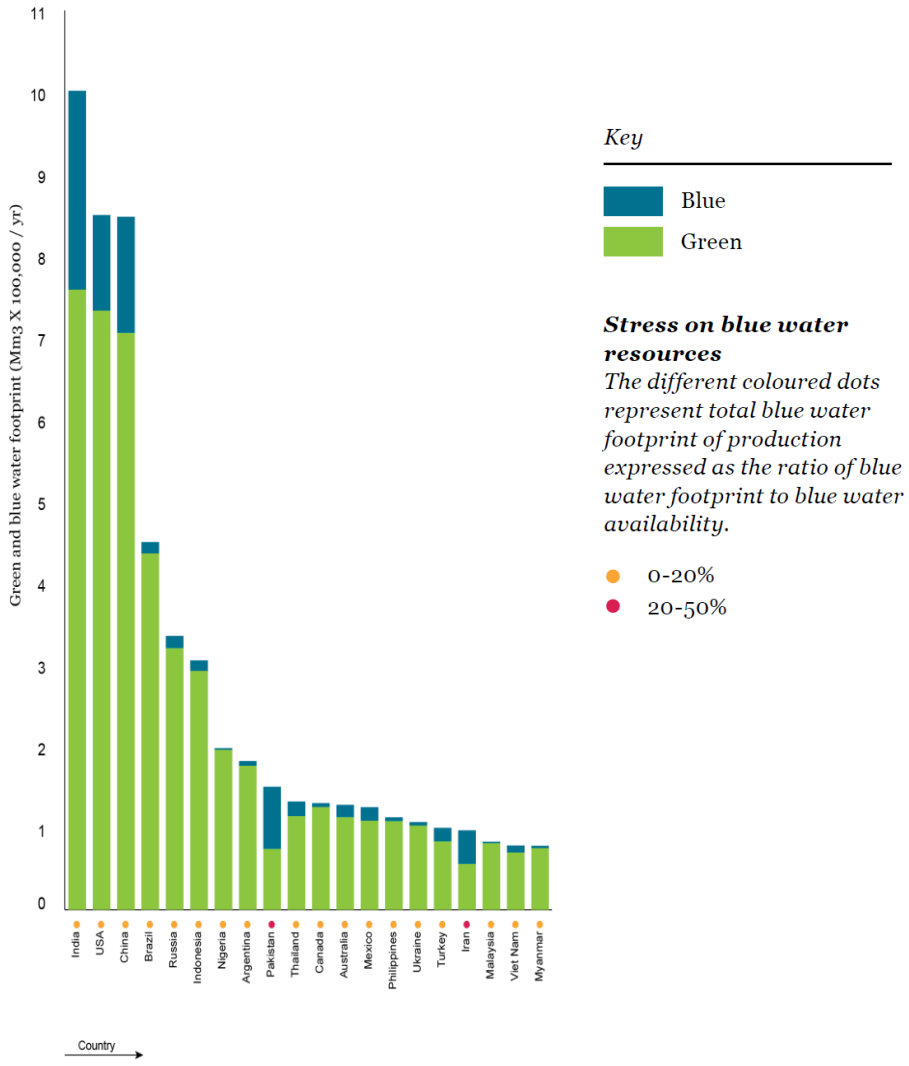
Low-income countries have the smallest footprint, but suffer the greatest ecosystem losses. Most high-income countries have maintained footprints greater than the amount of biocapacity available on the planet for over fifty years. While people in middle- and low-income countries have seen little increase in their relatively small per capita footprints, low-income countries show dramatic declines in biodiversity (58%), middle-income countries also show losses (18%), and high-income countries show an increase (10%). It should be noted that high-income countries may be outsourcing biodiversity loss and its impacts to lower-income countries through the importation of resources.

Water Footprint of National Production

Water scarcity is an increasing problem aggravated by population growth and climate. Water Footprint of National Production shows how each country uses water for household, industrial and agricultural purposes, regardless of where the products are consumed. The world's two leading economies and carbon emitters, China and the United States, are also among the nations that use the most water for national production of goods.

More than 200 river basins, home to over 2.5 billion people, already experience severe water scarcity for at least one month every year. At the same time, extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change could lead to impacts on global food trade. The five countries with the largest water footprints of production are: India, the United States of America, China, Brazil and Russia.

Figure 3 - Water footprint of national production of top 20 countries with indication of overall risk of blue water scarcity (Source: Hoekstra and Mekonnen, 2012)



Water Footprint of National Production is provided by the Water Footprint Network.

The path to sustainable development

No country is achieving both a high level of human development and a globally sustainable footprint, but some are moving in the right direction. For a country to achieve globally sustainable development, it must have a per capita Ecological Footprint smaller than the per capita biocapacity available on the planet, while maintaining a decent standard of living as defined by global measures. The path of progression varies from country to country. Data in the report shows that some countries have increased human development while keeping relative control over footprint.

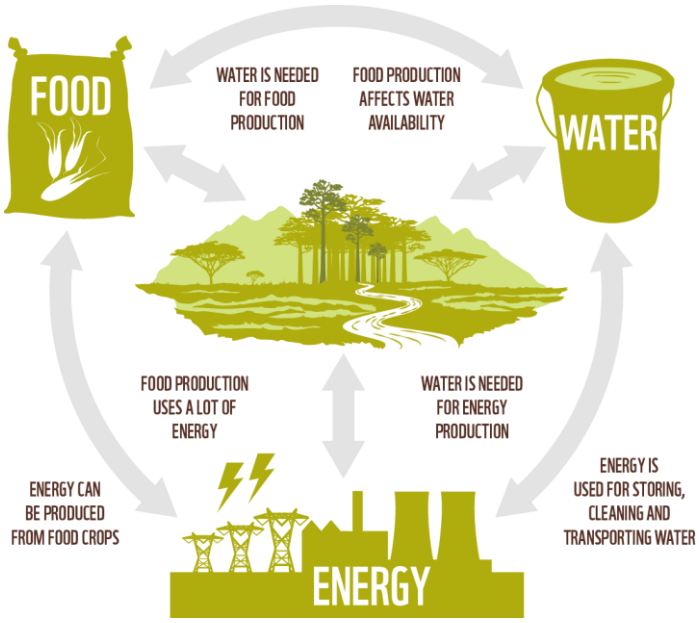
The climate connection

The *Living Planet Report 2014* is released only months after a United Nations study suggested that climate change could affect every part of the planet. The impact of climate change is found in both the footprint and biodiversity measures of the WWF report. Carbon footprint from the burning of fossil fuels accounts for over one-half of the total Ecological Footprint, and is the dominant footprint factor for about half of the countries tracked. Climate change is also noted as a growing threat to wildlife populations. Research highlighted in the report notes that many terrestrial, freshwater and marine species have shifted their geographic ranges and activities in response to climate change. Other research cited says that climate change is already responsible for the decline and possible extinction of species. Constructive negotiations over an international climate deal are among the opportunities that exist to reduce the impacts of climate change on the natural environment.

Food, water and energy

With human population predicted to surge beyond 9.5 billion by 2050, the challenge of providing everyone with the food, water and energy they need is already a daunting prospect. Climate change and the depletion of ecosystems and natural resources will further exacerbate the situation. While the world's poorest continue to be the most vulnerable, the issues of food, water and energy security affect us all. This interdependence means that efforts to secure one aspect can easily destabilize others – attempts to boost agricultural productivity, for example, may lead to increased demands for water and energy inputs, and impact biodiversity and ecosystem services. Protecting nature and using its resources responsibly are prerequisites for human development and well-being, and for building resilient, healthy communities.

Figure 4 - The inter-relationships and interdependencies between the biosphere and food, water and energy security



Opportunities for positive change

Continuing decline in biodiversity and worsening of ecological overshoot are the result of decisions that do not adequately account for the needs of our natural world. The same indicators that show where we have gone wrong can point us to a better path. Changing our course and finding alternative pathways will not be easy, but can be done. At the Rio+20 conference in 2012, the world's governments affirmed their commitment to an "economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations." This is what we need to aim for.

A series of upcoming international meetings to negotiate a new climate deal and agree a post-2015 development agenda provide the opportunities to reach this common goal. WWF's "One Planet Perspective" provides the framework. We need to divert investment away from the causes of environmental problems and toward the solutions. We also need to make fair, far-sighted and ecologically informed choices about how we manage the resources we share. Our remaining natural capital should be preserved by protecting and restoring important ecosystems and habitats. We also need to produce better and consume more wisely if we are to reverse the trends identified in the *Living Planet Report 2014*.

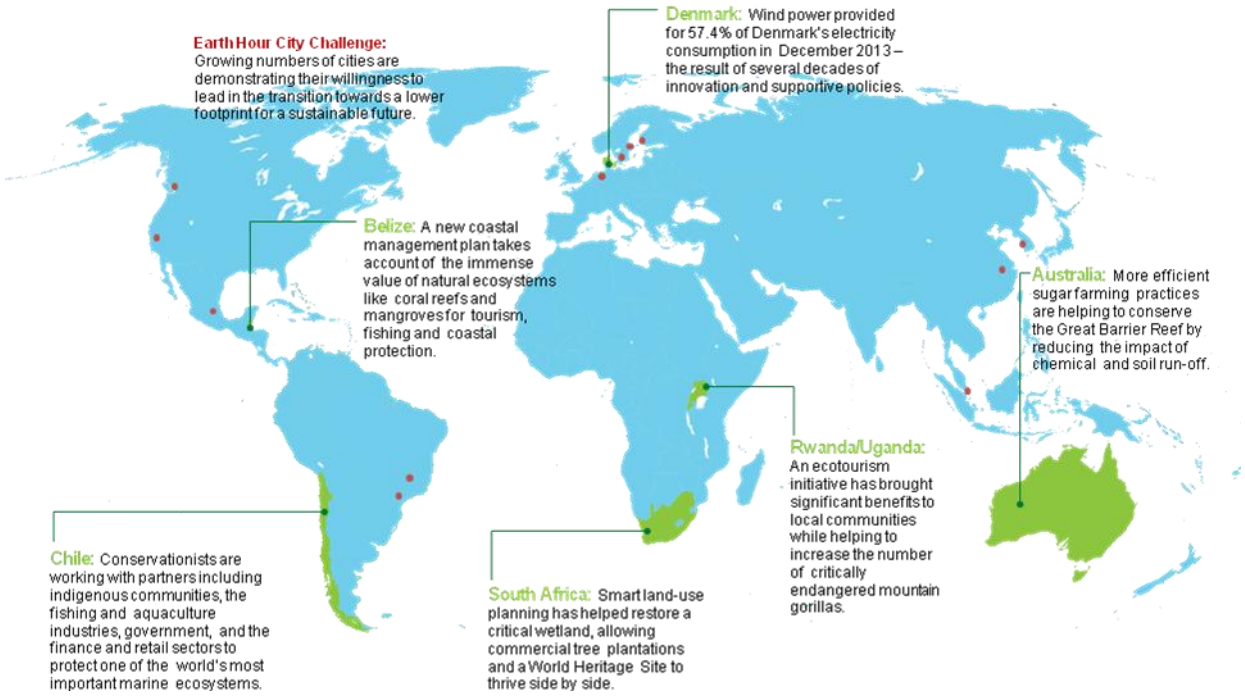


Figure 6 - The One Planet Perspective in action / Case Studies

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