



[Newswatch](#) > Human activity degrades Natural World Heritage Sites

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A report published in the journal [Biological Conservation](#) finds that recent increases in human pressure and forest loss are causing the degradation of over 100 Natural World Heritage Sites (NWHS) globally.

Since 1993, 63% of NWHS have suffered from increased human pressure, according to the paper. The largest increases have been seen in Asian NWHS, and 91% of NWHS that contain forests have experienced forest loss since 2000.



Human pressure is the greatest threat to the environment

Results indicate that NWHS are becoming increasingly isolated and facing growing threat from human pressure outside their borders.

Agriculture and urbanisation were identified as the leading causes, resulting in loss of biodiversity, high extinction rates and ecosystems collapse.

The [World Heritage Convention](#) was adopted in 1972 to ensure the conservation of the world's most valuable natural and cultural resources. Over 190 countries have signed The Convention, committing to conserve 229

NWHS.

Yet the report highlights the growing challenges that undermine the convention's success, with threats now lying largely outside the NWHS and resulting from population pressure. It also reveals the urgent need for large-scale conservation initiatives.

The report notes that,

Anthropogenic habitat conversion due to human activities such as agriculture and urbanisation are driving biodiversity extinction rates well above background levels, and the condition of many ecosystems is in decline worldwide.

Senior author of the report, James Watson from the Wildlife Conservation Society and University of Queensland in Australia remarked that, *"The world would never accept the Acropolis being knocked down, nor a couple of pyramids being flattened for housing estates or roads, yet, right now, across our planet, we are letting many of our natural world heritage sites be fundamentally altered"*.

Humanity relies on ecosystems and biodiversity for its existence.

Population Matters believes that limiting our consumption and bringing population to sustainable levels is the most effective way to preserve our environment.

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