

Photo: UNEP/Stephanie Foote

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON BIODIVERSITY AND BIODIVERSITY FOR GREEN RECOVERY

Thierry Lucas, Programme Management Officer on Ecosystems and
Biodiversity, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

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programme

BIODIVERSITY AND COVID-19

- **1 million animal and plant species** threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2019)
- **75% of land** and **66% of oceans** have been altered by humans (IPBES)
- COVID-19 is one of many **zoonotic diseases** that are emerging with increasing frequency in the past few decades, in part because of human caused degradation of our natural world
- Zoonotic diseases account for **approximately ¾ of all emerging infectious diseases** (UNEP, 2020)

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON BIODIVERSITY

Deforestation

- Increased in the tropics since COVID-19 restrictions
- A surge in agricultural expansion and illegal mining accelerated forest loss in Brazil and Colombia
- Deforestation of the Amazon soared in South America. In April 2020, 405km² of rainforest wilderness was razed, an area almost **four times the size of Paris**
- Researchers compared deforestation in countries across the tropics during the first month of their most stringent COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. Data revealed **deforestation alerts more than doubled** since equivalent periods the year before

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Poaching and Habitat Encroachment

- Increased in areas previously under control e.g., Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda
- Wild animal hunting may have increased to fill gaps in income and availability of meat
- Limited monitoring of PAs and limited revenue from tourism is increasing the incidence of poaching in several countries
- Kenya Wildlife Service has seen **tourist revenue dive by 96% since the pandemic struck**
- Africa's tourism industry estimated to **lose up to \$250 billion** of earnings this year. One vulnerable area, the Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, saw **an 8,000 per cent** increase in traps and snares recovered between May and July last year
- Illegal fishing surged in various parts of the world. In Brazil, small-scale fishers reported sightings of industrial fishing vessels in protected regions including the Abrolhos Marine National Park, **a biodiversity hotspot**

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- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the relationship between **people** and **nature**
- Clear that the loss and degradation of biodiversity undermines the web of life and increases the risk of disease spillover from wildlife to people (GBO5)
- Responses to the current pandemic provide a unique **opportunity for transformative change** as a global community
- To support this transition, UNEP has identified the following critical areas to support a Nature-positive Transformation – as envisioned in the **post-2020 global biodiversity framework**

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Food and agricultural transformation – we need nature-positive food systems

- Up to **811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020** — a **20 per cent** increase in just one year
- Support nature-positive agricultural practices
- Promote access to and availability of healthy and sustainable diets
- Phase out harmful economic subsidies, incentives and policies in agriculture and fisheries
- Investing in food transformation could **produce 15 times greater return on investment** and unlock new business opportunities worth up to **\$ 4.5 trillion by 2030** according to the Food and Land Use Coalition

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Economic transformation – we need nature-positive finance

- Only **2.5% of USD 14.6 trillion** in public stimulus spending across the largest 50 countries has been directed to **green investment**
- The Greenness of Stimulus Index (GSI) found that a substantial part of the total capital will go towards sectors with **major negative impacts** on nature
- According to UNEP State of Finance for Nature report, a total investment in nature of **USD 8.1 trillion is required between now and 2050** in order to successfully tackle the interlinked climate, biodiversity, and land degradation crises. **Structural transformations are needed to close the USD 4.1 trillion finance gap** between now and 2050, by building back more sustainably in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Support economic and financial actors to value and account for nature and disclose their biodiversity performance

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Land and seascape transformation – we need nature-positive land and seascape

- The economic benefits of nature-based solutions **exceed by 10 times the cost of investment**, whereas **inaction is at least three times more costly** than ecosystem restoration
- Mangrove restoration in Vietnam helped reduce carbon emissions while **increasing fisheries yields estimated up to 6.7million USD**
- **OneHealth approach** would strengthen the resilience of social, ecological and economic systems (GBO-5 OneHealth Transition)
- Recent studies show that a combination of **increasing land under effective conservation management to 40% of terrestrial areas, restoring nearly 100 million hectares of degraded land, and widespread adoption of landscape level conservation approaches** could reduce and halt biodiversity loss by 2050

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The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
**ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION**
2021-2030

- A call for ACTION to halt, prevent and reverse the degradation of all ecosystems
- **\$1 invested** in restoration can create up to **\$30 in economic benefits**. With global restoration costs estimated at \$200bn a year, by 2030 **potential gains amount to \$6 trillion a year**, or **0.07 per cent of world GDP**
- The Decade wants to create a global movement. Achieving the aims of the UN Decade will require action by many
- The Decade calls for governments to ensure that their **COVID-19 recovery plans incorporate significant allocations for ecosystem restoration** as a central component to delivering a **green, sustainable and fair recovery**

A black and white kingfisher is perched on a branch in a mangrove forest. The bird has a prominent crest and a long, sharp beak. The background is filled with the intricate, light-colored branches of mangrove trees and clusters of green, waxy leaves.

THANK YOU

Thierry Lucas, Programme Management Officer on Ecosystems and Biodiversity, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)