
Earth Has Entered First 'Mass Extinction' Since Dinosaurs, Study Warns

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Vertebrates -- which include mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish -- are disappearing at a rate [114 times faster than normal](#), according the study published Friday in the journal Science Advances. The study, led by Stanford, Princeton and the University of California-Berkeley, stated the number of vertebrate species that have gone extinct in the last century normally take 800 to 10,000 years to disappear under natural extinction rates.

"These estimates reveal an exceptionally rapid loss of biodiversity over the last few centuries, indicating that a sixth mass extinction is already under way," the researchers wrote. The last such extinction was [65 million years ago](#), The Telegraph noted, when dinosaurs were wiped off the face of the planet.

Human activity related to development and climate change are exacerbating the problem, the study argued.

"Our analysis emphasizes that our global society has started to destroy species of other organisms at an accelerating rate, initiating a mass extinction episode unparalleled for 65 million years," the researchers wrote. "Avoiding a true sixth mass extinction will require rapid, greatly intensified efforts to conserve already threatened species and to alleviate pressures on their populations -- notably habitat loss, overexploitation for economic gain, and climate change ... However, the window of opportunity is rapidly closing."

The study found that given these extinctions, the benefits of biodiversity like crop pollination and

water purification could disappear in as little as three lifetimes, putting the human species in serious danger before others.

"If it is allowed to continue," lead study author Gerardo Ceballos told BBC News, "life would take many millions of years to recover and our species itself [would likely disappear early on](#)."
