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REPORT

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2014

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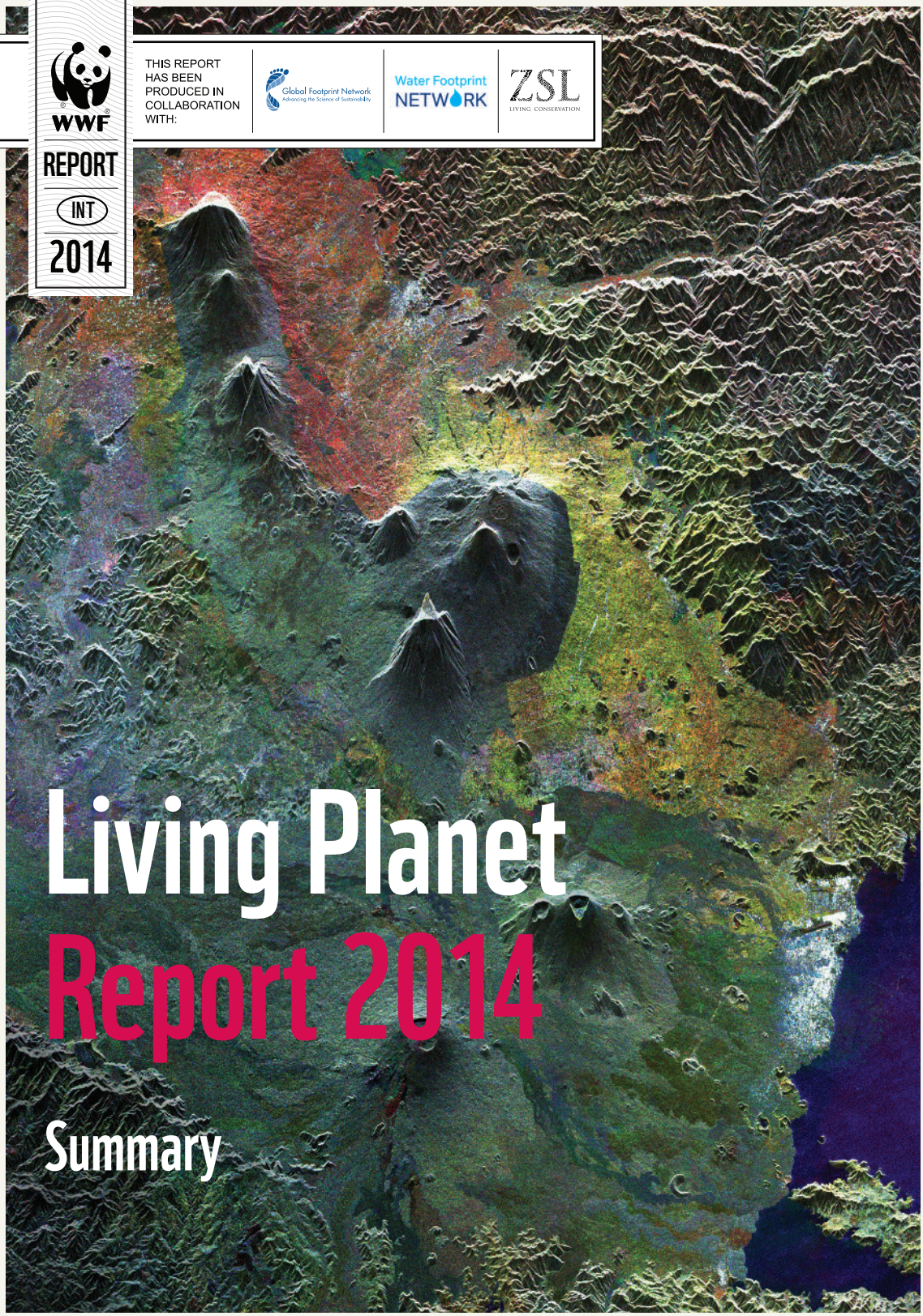
Water Footprint NETWORK

ZSL
LIVING CONSERVATION



Living Planet Report 2014

Summary

BIODIVERSITY IS DECLINING SHARPLY, WHILE OUR DEMANDS
SPECIES POPULATIONS WORLDWIDE HAVE DECLINED 52 PER
THE DEMANDS WE CURRENTLY MAKE ON NATURE. THIS
MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN THE NEEDS OF
HUMAN POPULATION AND HIGH PER CAPITA FOOTPRINT
OUR RESOURCES. COUNTRIES WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF HUMAN
FOOTPRINTS. THE CHALLENGE IS FOR COUNTRIES TO
THEIR FOOTPRINT DOWN TO GLOBALLY SUSTAINABLE
"PLANETARY BOUNDARIES" THAT COULD LEAD TO ABRUPT
HUMAN WELL-BEING DEPENDS ON NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES SUCH AS POLLINATION,
WHILE THE WORLD'S POOREST CONTINUE TO BE MOST
WATER AND ENERGY SECURITY AFFECT US ALL. WWF'S
FOR A LIVING PLANET – FOCUSING ON PROTECTING
MORE WISELY, REDIRECTING FINANCIAL FLOWS
CHANGING OUR COURSE AND FINDING ALTERNATIVE

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ON NATURE ARE UNSUSTAINABLE AND INCREASING.
CENT SINCE 1970. WE NEED 1.5 EARTHS TO MEET
MEANS WE ARE EATING INTO OUR NATURAL CAPITAL,
FUTURE GENERATIONS. THE DUAL EFFECT OF A GROWING
WILL MULTIPLY THE PRESSURE WE PLACE ON
DEVELOPMENT TEND TO HAVE HIGHER ECOLOGICAL
INCREASE THEIR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT WHILE KEEPING
LEVELS. WE MAY HAVE ALREADY CROSSED
OR IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES.
SUCH AS WATER, ARABLE LAND, FISH AND WOOD;
NUTRIENT CYCLING AND EROSION CONTROL.
VULNERABLE, THE INTERCONNECTED ISSUES OF FOOD,
ONE PLANET PERSPECTIVE PROVIDES SOLUTIONS
NATURAL CAPITAL, PRODUCING BETTER, CONSUMING
AND MORE EQUITABLE RESOURCE GOVERNANCE.
PATHWAYS WILL NOT BE EASY. BUT IT CAN BE DONE.

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FOREWORD

We are all in this together

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This latest edition of the *Living Planet Report* is not for the faint-hearted. One key point that jumps out is that the *Living Planet Index* (LPI), which measures more than 10,000 representative populations of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, has declined by 52 per cent since 1970. Put another way, in less than two human generations, population sizes of vertebrate species have dropped by half. These are the living forms that constitute the fabric of the ecosystems which sustain life on Earth – and the barometer of what we are doing to our own planet, our only home. We ignore their decline at our peril.

We are using nature's gifts as if we had more than just one Earth at our disposal. By taking more from our ecosystems and natural processes than can be replenished, we are jeopardizing our very future. Nature conservation and sustainable development go hand-in-hand. They are not only about preserving biodiversity and wild places, but just as much about safeguarding the future of humanity – our well-being, economy, food security and social stability – indeed, our very survival.

In a world where so many people live in poverty, it may appear as though protecting nature is a luxury. But it is quite the opposite. For many of the world's poorest people, it is a lifeline. Importantly though, we are all in this together. We all need nutritious food, fresh water and clean air – wherever in the world we live.

Things look so worrying that it may seem difficult to feel positive about the future. Difficult, certainly, but not impossible – because it is in ourselves, who have caused the problem, that we can find the solution. Now we must work to ensure that the upcoming generation can seize the opportunity that we have so far failed to grasp, to close this destructive chapter in our history, and build a future where people can live and prosper in harmony with nature.

We are all connected – and collectively, we have the potential to find and adopt the solutions that will safeguard the future of this, our one and only planet.

WE MUST SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CLOSE THIS DESTRUCTIVE CHAPTER IN OUR HISTORY, AND BUILD A FUTURE IN WHICH PEOPLE LIVE AND PROSPER IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Marco Lambertini
Director General
WWF International

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SPECIES AND SPACES, PEOPLE AND PLACES

Our societies and economies depend on a healthy planet

Sustainable development has figured prominently on the international agenda for more than a quarter of a century. People talk earnestly of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development. Yet we continue to build-up the economic component, at considerable cost to the environmental one. We risk undermining social and economic gains by failing to appreciate our fundamental dependency on ecological systems. Social and economic sustainability are only possible with a healthy planet.

Ecosystems sustain societies that create economies. It does not work the other way round. But although human beings are a product of the natural world, we have become the dominant force that shapes ecological and biophysical systems. In doing so, we are not only threatening our health, prosperity and well-being, but our very future. *The Living Planet Report*® 2014 reveals the effects of the pressures we are placing on the planet. It explores the implications for society. And it underlines the importance of the choices we make, and the steps we take, to ensure this living planet can continue to sustain us all, now and for generations to come.

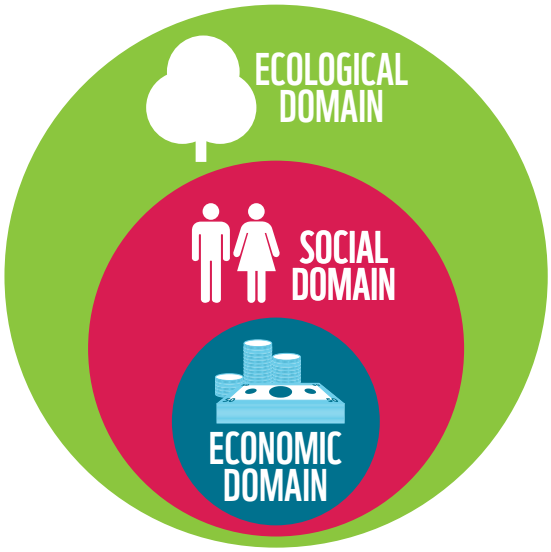

Figure 1: Ecosystems sustain societies that create economies

***Living Planet Report* 2014**

This booklet provides a summary of the tenth edition of WWF's *Living Planet Report* ® – a biennial publication that documents the state of the planet – the changing state of biodiversity, ecosystems and humanity's demand on natural resources – and what this means for humanity.

Download the full report at wwf.panda.org/lpr

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A LIVING PLANET

Only around 880 mountain gorillas remain in the wild – about 200 of them in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although they remain critically endangered, they are the only type of great ape whose numbers are increasing, thanks to intensive conservation efforts.

Mountain gorillas are among the 218 mammal species found in Virunga, along with 706 bird species, 109 reptile species, 78 amphibian species and more than 2,000 species of plants. But oil concessions have been allocated across 85 per cent of the park, putting its long-term future in doubt. Drilling for oil could lead to habitat degradation and see the park lose its protected status and World Heritage Site listing, leaving its wildlife increasingly vulnerable.

Globally, habitat loss and degradation, hunting and climate change are the main threats facing the world's biodiversity. They have contributed to a decline of 52 per cent in the *Living Planet Index* ® since 1970 – in other words, the number of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish with which we share our planet has fallen by half.

THE LIVING PLANET INDEX

Population sizes of vertebrate species have halved over the last 40 years

The state of the world's biodiversity appears worse than ever. The Living Planet Index (LPI), which measures trends in thousands of vertebrate species populations, shows a decline of 52 per cent between 1970 and 2010 (Figure 2). 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, as a result of a new methodology which aims to be more representative of global biodiversity.

Biodiversity is declining in both temperate and tropical regions, but the decline is greater in the tropics. The 6,569 populations of 1,606 species in the temperate LPI declined by 36 per cent from 1970 to 2010. The tropical LPI shows a 56 per cent reduction in 3,811 populations of 1,638 species over the same period. Latin America shows the most dramatic decline – a fall of 83 per cent. Habitat loss and degradation, and exploitation through hunting and fishing, are the primary causes of decline. Climate change is the next most common primary threat, and is likely to put more pressure on populations in the future.

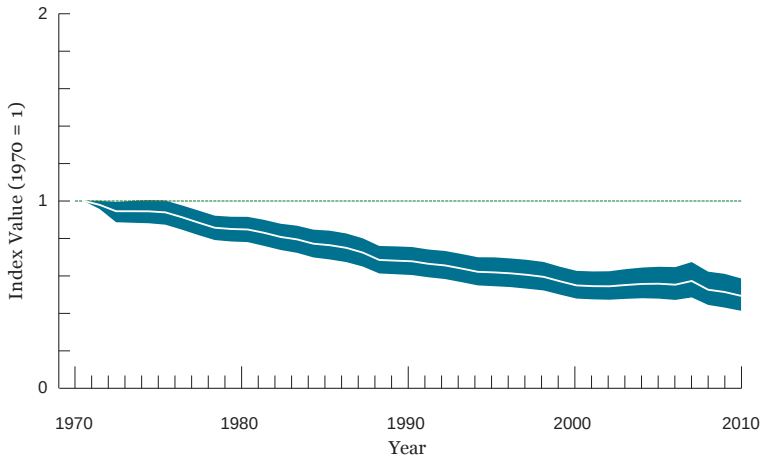

Figure 2: Living Planet Index (LPI)
The global LPI shows a decline of 52 per cent between 1970 and 2010. This suggests that, on average, vertebrate species populations are about half the size they were 40 years ago. This is based on trends in 10,380 populations of 3,038 mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish species. The white line shows the index values and the shaded areas represent the 95 per cent confidence limits surrounding the trend. (WWF, ZSL, 2014).

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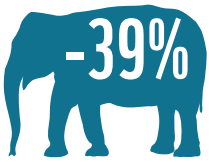

Terrestrial LPI

TERRESTRIAL SPECIES DECLINED BY 39 PER CENT BETWEEN 1970 AND 2010

Terrestrial species declined by 39 per cent between 1970 and 2010, a trend that shows no sign of slowing down. The loss of habitat to make way for human land use – particularly for agriculture, urban development and energy production – continues to be a major threat, compounded by hunting.

Freshwater LPI

THE LPI FOR FRESHWATER SPECIES SHOWS AN AVERAGE DECLINE OF 76 PER CENT

The LPI for freshwater species shows an average decline of 76 per cent. The main threats to freshwater species are habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution and invasive species. Changes to water levels and freshwater system connectivity – for example through irrigation and hydropower dams – have a major impact on freshwater habitats.

Marine LPI

MARINE SPECIES DECLINED 39 PER CENT BETWEEN 1970 AND 2010

Marine species declined 39 per cent between 1970 and 2010. The period from 1970 through to the mid-1980s experienced the steepest decline, after which there was some stability, before another recent period of decline. The steepest declines can be seen in the tropics and the Southern Ocean – species in decline include marine turtles, many sharks, and large migratory seabirds like the wandering albatross.

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THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

We are using more than Earth can provide

For more than 40 years, humanity's demand on nature has exceeded what our planet can replenish. We would need the regenerative capacity of 1.5 Earths to provide the ecological services we currently use. "Overshoot" is possible because we can cut trees faster than they mature, harvest more fish than oceans replenish, or emit more carbon into the atmosphere than forests and oceans can absorb. 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.

The Ecological Footprint adds up the ecological goods and services people demand that compete for space. It includes the biologically productive area (or biocapacity) needed for crops, grazing land, built-up areas, fishing grounds and forest products. It also includes the area of forest needed to absorb additional carbon dioxide emissions that cannot be absorbed by the oceans. Both biocapacity and Ecological Footprint are expressed in a common unit called a global hectare (gha).

Carbon from burning fossil fuels has been the dominant component of humanity's Ecological Footprint for more than half a century, and remains on an upward trend. In 1961, carbon was 36 per cent of our total Footprint; by 2010, it comprised 53 per cent.

1 GLOBAL HECTARE (GHA) REPRESENTS A BIOLOGICALLY PRODUCTIVE HECTARE WITH WORLD AVERAGE PRODUCTIVITY

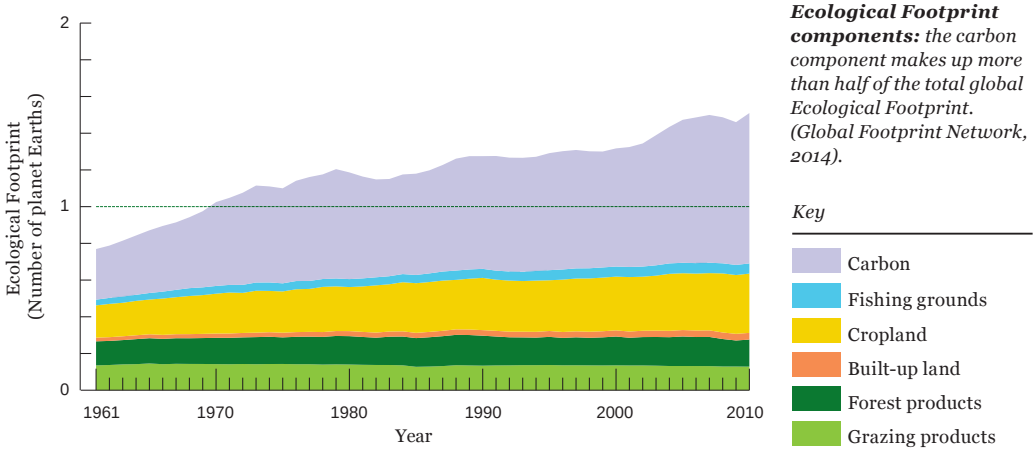

Figure 3: The Ecological Footprint components: *the carbon component makes up more than half of the total global Ecological Footprint. (Global Footprint Network, 2014).*

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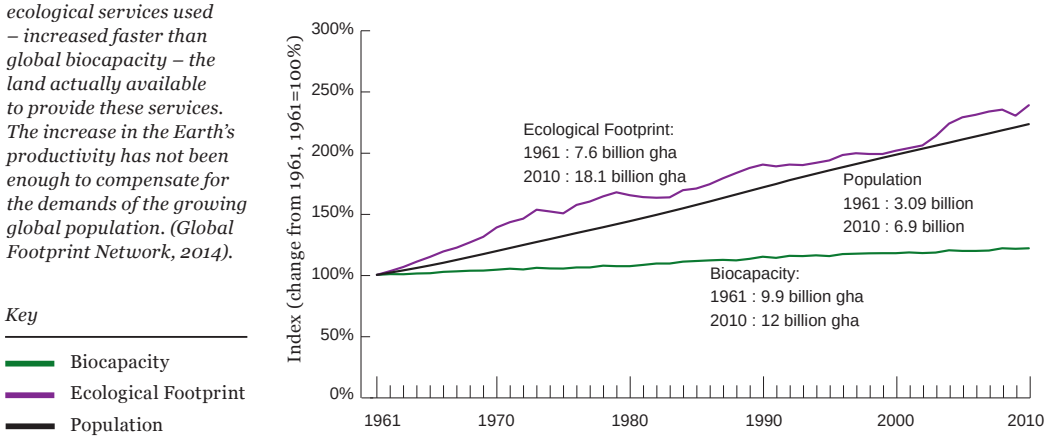
Technological advances, agricultural inputs and irrigation have boosted the average yields per hectare of productive area, especially for cropland, raising the planet's total biocapacity from 9.9 to 12 billion global hectares (gha) between 1961 and 2010. However, during the same period, the global human population increased from 3.1 billion to nearly 7 billion, reducing the available biocapacity per capita from 3.2 to 1.7 gha. Meanwhile, Ecological Footprints increased from 2.5 to 2.7 gha per capita. So while biocapacity has increased globally, there is now less of it to go around. With world population projected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050 and 11 billion by 2100, the amount of biocapacity available for each of us will shrink further – and it will be increasingly challenging to maintain biocapacity increases in the face of soil degradation, freshwater scarcity and increased energy costs.

IN 2010, GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT WAS 18.1 BILLION GHA, OR 2.6 GHA PER CAPITA. EARTH'S TOTAL BIOCAPACITY WAS 12 BILLION GHA, OR 1.7 GHA PER CAPITA

Figure 4: The growing global Footprint: *The Ecological Footprint – which measures the area required to supply the ecological services used – increased faster than global biocapacity – the land actually available to provide these services. The increase in the Earth's productivity has not been enough to compensate for the demands of the growing global population. (Global Footprint Network, 2014).*



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FOOTPRINT BY COUNTRY

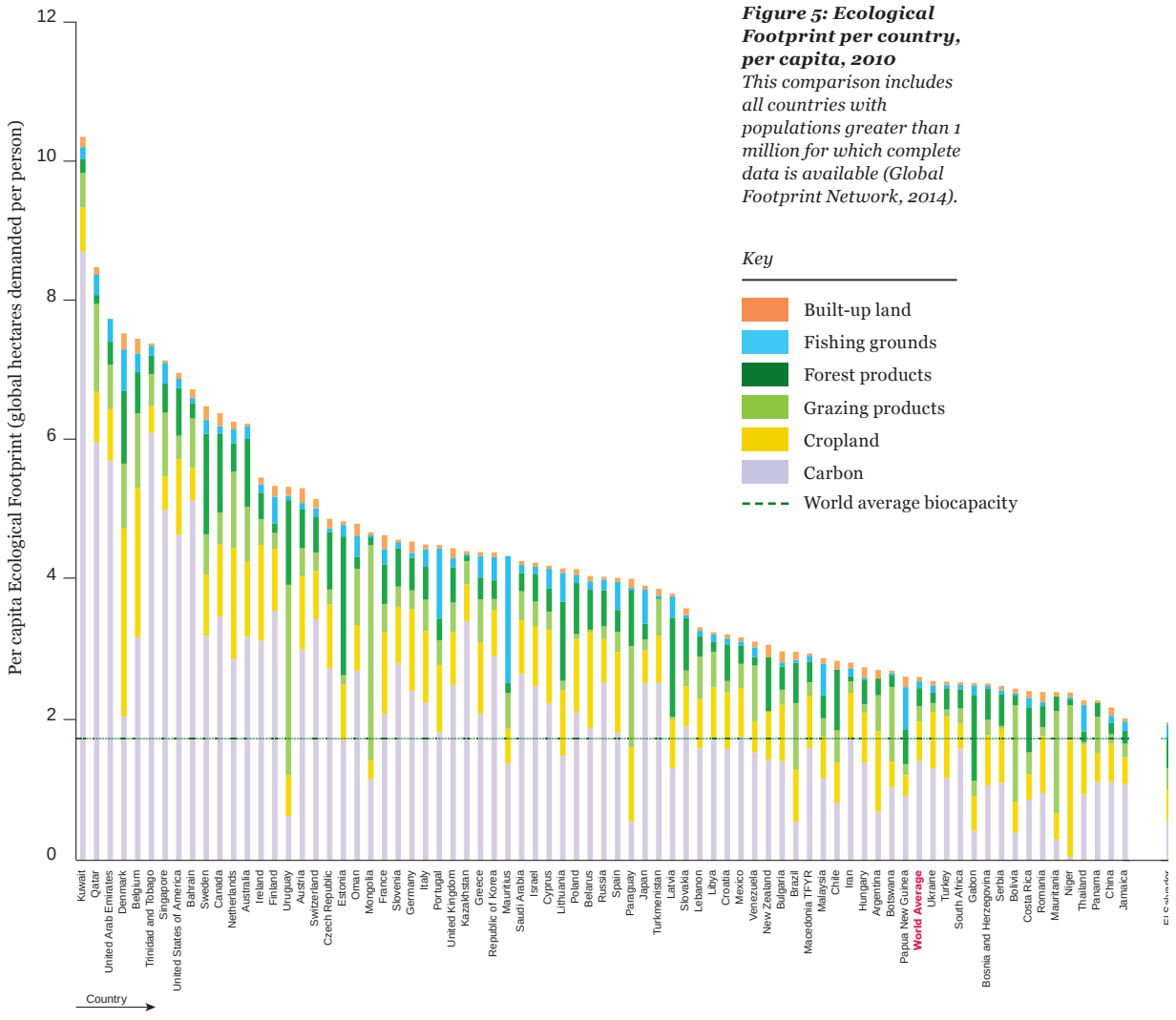

Figure 5: Ecological Footprint per country, per capita, 2010
This comparison includes all countries with populations greater than 1 million for which complete data is available (Global Footprint Network, 2014).

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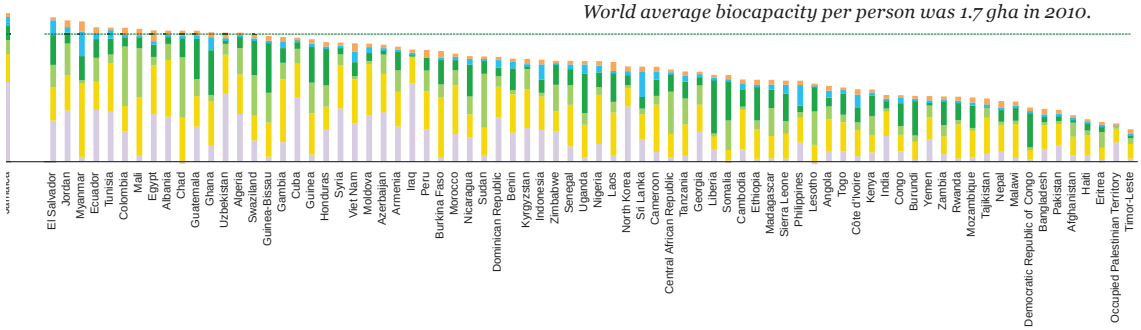
The size and composition of a nation's per capita Ecological Footprint is determined by the goods and services used by an average person in that country, and the efficiency with which resources, including fossil fuels, are used in providing these goods and services. Not surprisingly, most of the 25 countries with the largest per capita Ecological Footprints are high-income nations; for virtually all of them, carbon was the biggest Footprint component.

Contributions to global ecological overshoot vary across nations. For example, if all people on the planet had the Footprint of the average resident of Qatar, we would need 4.8 planets. If we lived the lifestyle of a typical resident of the US, we would need 3.9 planets. The figure for a typical resident of Slovakia or South Korea would be 2 or 2.5 planets respectively, while a typical resident of South Africa or Argentina would need 1.4 or 1.5 planets respectively.

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL THE CARBON FOOTPRINT REPRESENTS MORE THAN HALF THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT FOR A QUARTER OF ALL COUNTRIES TRACKED



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LOCAL NEEDS, GLOBAL PRESSURES

In the weekly market in Vitshumbi, people buy fresh vegetables and freshly caught fish from Lake Edward. The lake was at the centre of oil exploration activities carried out by UK-based Soco International PLC. The company agreed to stop operations in Virunga National Park earlier this year following an international campaign led by WWF.

Few countries are richer in biocapacity and natural resources than DRC. Yet its inhabitants have one of the lowest Ecological Footprints on the planet, and the country sits rock bottom of the UN inequality-adjusted Human Development Index.

Oil extraction in Virunga, to help fuel the unsustainable lifestyles of higher-income countries, might bring short-term profits to a few. But it's unlikely to deliver real development: In the Niger Delta, poverty and inequality indicators have worsened since the discovery of oil. In the long term, the only way for the Congolese people to meet their needs and improve their prospects is through sustainable management and wise use of the country's natural capital.

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UNEQUAL DEMANDS, UNEQUAL CONSEQUENCES

Low-income countries have the smallest Footprint, but suffer the greatest ecosystem losses

Most high-income countries have maintained per capita Footprints greater than the amount of biocapacity available per person on this planet for over half a century, largely depending on the biocapacity of other countries to support their lifestyles. People in middle- and low-income countries have seen little increase in their relatively small per capita Footprints over the same time period.

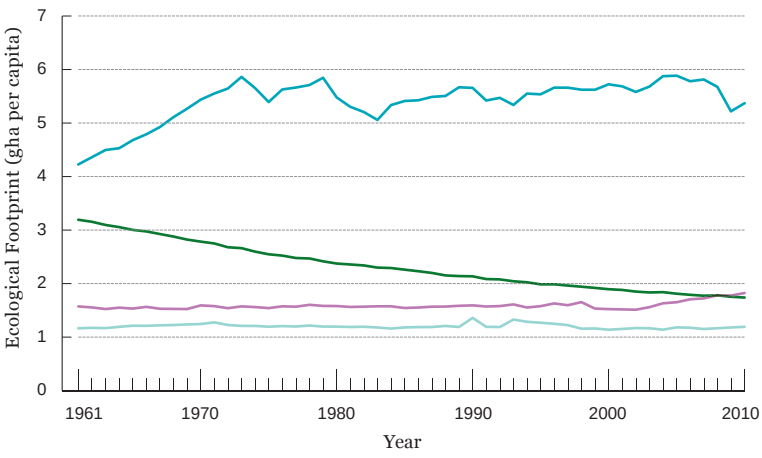

Figure 6: Ecological Footprint per capita (gha) in high-, middle- and low-income countries (World Bank classification and data) between 1961 and 2010
The green line represents world average biocapacity per capita. (Global Footprint Network, 2014).

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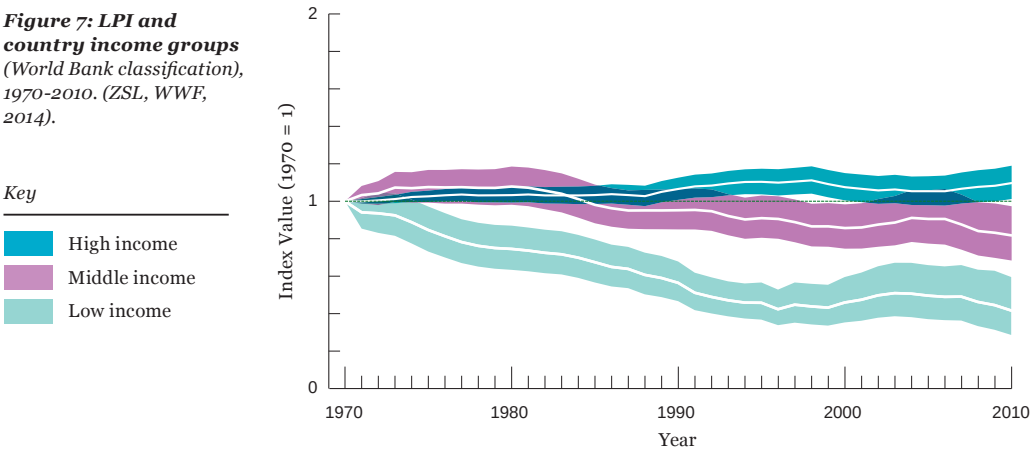
Comparing LPI trends in countries with different average levels of income shows stark differences. While high-income countries show an increase (10 per cent) in biodiversity, middle-income countries show decline (18 per cent), and low-income countries show dramatic and marked decline (58 per cent). However, this masks large-scale biodiversity loss before 1970 in Europe, North America and Australia. It may also reflect the way high-income countries import resources – effectively outsourcing biodiversity loss and its impacts to lower-income countries.

THE TRENDS OF LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO BE CATASTROPHIC, BOTH FOR BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE

Figure 7: LPI and country income groups *(World Bank classification), 1970-2010. (ZSL, WWF, 2014).*



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THE PATH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

No country is yet achieving a high level of human development with 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. The former means a per capita Footprint lower than 1.7 gha – the maximum that could be replicated worldwide without resulting in global overshoot. The latter can be defined as a score of 0.71 or above on the UN inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI). Currently, no country meets both of these criteria.

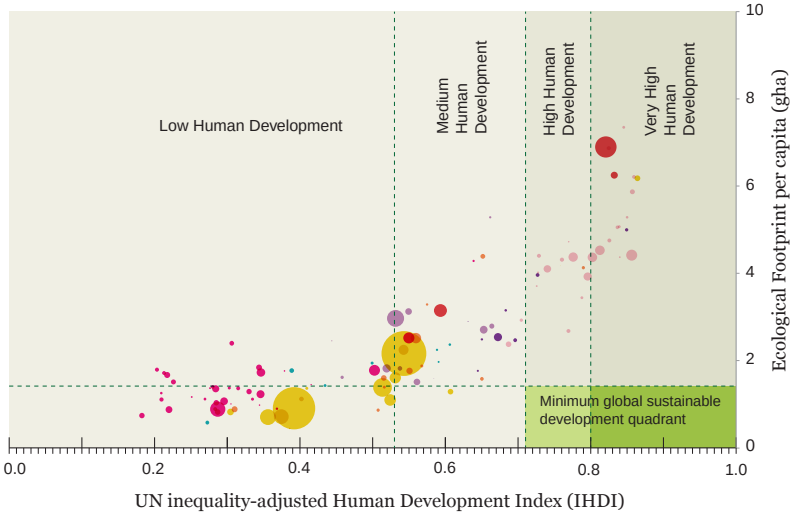
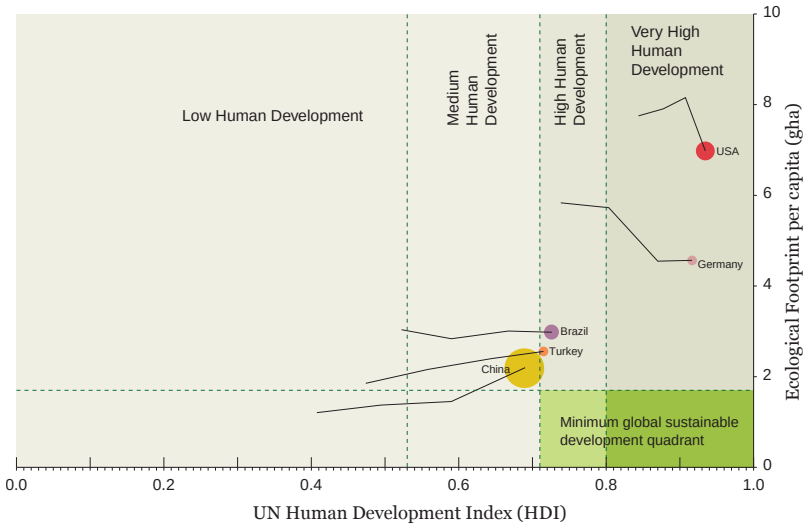


Figure 8: Correlating the Ecological Footprint with inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (for latest year) *The dots representing each country are coloured according to their geographic region and scaled relative to their population. No country is yet within the global sustainable development quadrant in the bottom right corner.*

Key

- Africa
- Middle East/ Central Asia
- Asia -Pacific
- South America
- Central America/ Caribbean
- North America
- EU
- Other Europe

Figure 9: The Ecological Footprint in relation to HDI
Time trends (1980-2010) are shown for a small selection of countries. The dotted lines mark the HDI thresholds for low, medium, high and very high human development. (Global Footprint Network, 2014; UNDP, 2013). NOTE: Since IHDI was not introduced until 2010, in this graph HDI is not inequality-adjusted.



However, some countries are moving in the right direction. The path of progression varies from country to country. Figure 9 shows that some countries have significantly increased their human development with a relatively low increase in Footprint, while others have reduced their Footprint while maintaining high levels of development.

THE ELEVATED HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN HIGH INCOME COUNTRIES HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AT THE EXPENSE OF A LARGE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT. DECOUPLING AND REVERSING THIS RELATIONSHIP IS A KEY GLOBAL CHALLENGE

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Defining the safe space for life on Earth

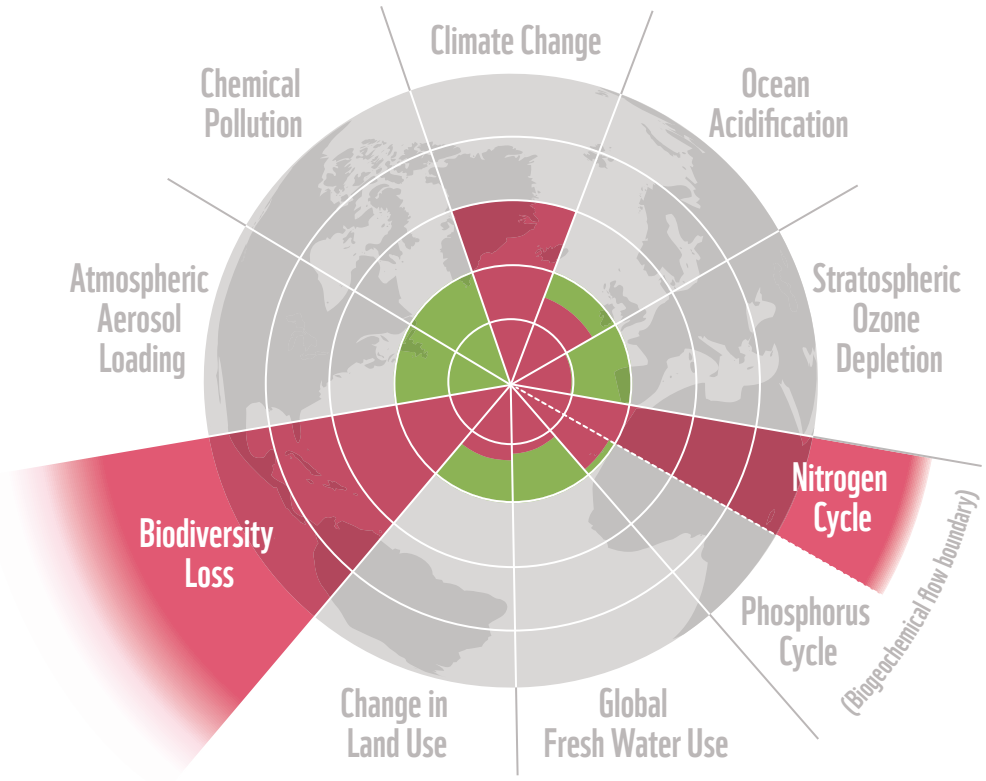
Complementary information and indicators deepen and extend our understanding of our living planet by panning out to focus on global issues or zooming in on specific regions, themes or species. Humans have profited hugely from the extraordinarily predictable and stable environmental conditions of the last 10,000 years – the geological period known as the Holocene, which made it possible for settled human communities to evolve and eventually develop into the modern societies of today. But the world has entered a new period – the "Anthropocene" – in which human activities are the largest drivers of change at the planetary scale. Given the pace and scale of change, we can no longer exclude the possibility of reaching critical tipping points that could abruptly and irreversibly change living conditions on Earth.

Figure 10: Planetary boundaries
Defining planetary boundaries establishes a "safe operating space for humanity", where we have the best chance of continuing to develop and thrive for many generations to come (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2009).

Key

Progress by 2009

Safe limits



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The planetary boundaries framework identifies the environmental processes that regulate the stability of the planet. For each it attempts to define, based on the best available science, safe boundaries. Beyond these boundaries, we enter a danger zone where abrupt negative changes are likely to occur.

While exact tipping-points are impossible to determine with any degree of certainty, three planetary boundaries appear to have already been transgressed: biodiversity loss, and changes to the climate and nitrogen cycle, with already visible impacts on the well-being of human health and our demands on food, water and energy.

The planetary boundaries concept suggests that the existence of the world that we have known and profited from through the Holocene now depends on our actions as planetary stewards.

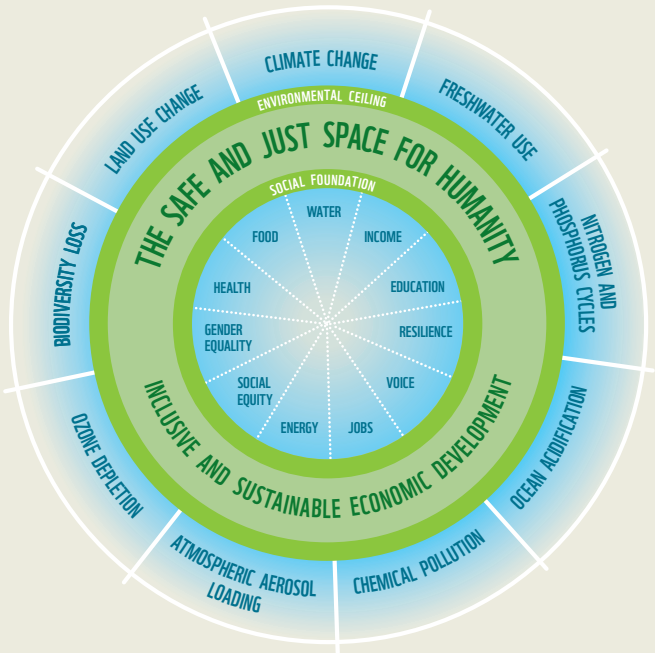

Figure 11: The Oxfam Doughnut – A safe and just operating space for humanity
Safe in that it avoids crossing environmental tipping points, and just in that it ensures that every person achieves certain standards of health, wealth, power and participation (Raworth, 2012).

The planetary boundaries concept raises questions about justice and development within the means of one planet. Just as beyond the environmental ceiling lies unacceptable environmental stress, below a "social foundation" lies unacceptable human deprivation.

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BRIGHT SPARKS

Generating energy doesn't always have to be damaging to the environment. This welder is at work on a community hydropower project in Mutwanga, DRC, which relies on water from Virunga National Park. The project, set up by the Congolese Wildlife Authority, will provide electricity to 25,000 people. It will also power schools, a hospital and an orphanage, as well as creating jobs and business opportunities. At the same time, nearby residents have a greater incentive to look after the park's forests and wetlands, which ensure the water supply. Unlike many misplaced and poorly planned hydropower developments around the world, this project will have minimal impacts on ecosystems.

Around the world, projects like this one are showing that development and conservation can go hand in hand, and that protecting natural capital can lead to genuine social and economic progress.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE

Environmental changes affect all of us

For many, planet Earth and the staggering web of life to which we all belong are worth protecting for their own sake. A sense of wonder and a profound respect for nature runs deep in many cultures and religions. People instinctively relate to the well-known proverb: *We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children*. Yet we are not proving good stewards of our one planet. The way we meet our needs today is compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs – the very opposite of sustainable development.

7.2 BILLION IN 2013
9.6 BILLION IN 2050

World population is growing at a fast rate

3.6 BILLION IN 2011
6.3 BILLION IN 2050

The majority of the world's population now lives in cities

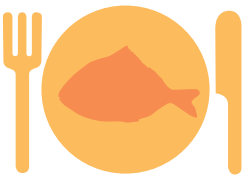
2 BILLION

Forest ecosystems provide shelter, livelihoods, water, fuel and food security for more than 2 billion people

70% & 30%

Food production accounts for around 70% of water use and 30% of energy use globally

15%



Fisheries supply 15% of the animal protein in our diets, rising to more than 50% in many of the least developed countries in Africa and Asia

45%

45% of freshwater use in industrialized countries is for energy generation

Humanity's well-being and prosperity – indeed, our very existence – depends on healthy ecosystems and the services they supply, from clean water and a liveable climate, to food, fuel, fibre and fertile soils. Progress has been made in recent years in quantifying the financial value of this natural capital and the dividends that flow from it. Such valuations make an economic case for conserving nature and living sustainably – although any valuation of ecosystem services is a "gross underestimate of infinity", since without them there can be no life on Earth.

660 MILLION

Marine ecosystems support more than 660 million jobs globally

ONE THIRD

One-third of the planet's major cities depend on nature reserves for their drinking water

US$6.6 TRILLION

The estimated cost of environmental damage globally in 2008 was US$6.6 trillion – equivalent to 11% of global GDP

>40%

Global freshwater demand is projected to exceed current supply by more than 40% by 2030

768 MILLION

768 million people don't have a safe, clean water supply

39 of 63

Of the 63 most populated urban areas, 39 are exposed to a high risk of at least one natural hazard – including flooding, cyclones and droughts

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FOOD, WATER AND ENERGY

Our demands are linked to the health of the biosphere

With the human population predicted to swell by 2 billion by 2050, the challenge of providing everyone with the food, water and energy they need is already a daunting prospect. Today, almost a billion people suffer from hunger, 768 million live without a safe, clean water supply and 1.4 billion lack access to a reliable electricity supply. Climate change and the depletion of ecosystems and natural resources will further exacerbate the situation. While the world's poorest continue to be most vulnerable, food, water and energy security issues affect us all.

Food, water and energy security and ecosystem health are closely intertwined. This interdependance 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.

The way we source our demands affects the health of ecosystems, and the health of ecosystems affects our ability to secure these demands. This is equally relevant for the poorest rural communities – who often rely directly on nature for their livelihoods – as for the world's great cities, which are increasingly vulnerable to threats such as flooding and pollution as a result of environmental degradation.

Protecting nature and using its resources responsibly are prerequisites for human development and well-being, and for building resilient, healthy communities.

TODAY ALMOST A BILLION PEOPLE SUFFER FROM HUNGER, 768 MILLION LIVE WITHOUT A SAFE, CLEAN WATER SUPPLY AND 1.4 BILLION LACK ACCESS TO A RELIABLE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

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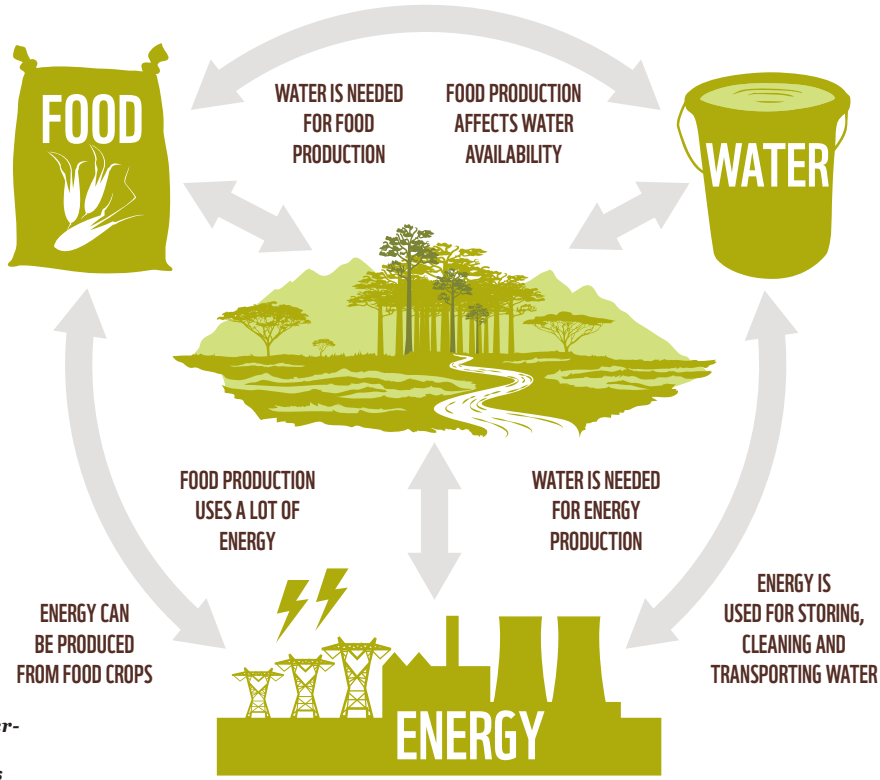

Figure 12: The inter-relationships and interdependencies between the biosphere and food, water and energy security
How we produce food, use water or generate energy impacts on the biosphere that supports these needs.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ARE THE BASIS OF OUR PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING. AND THE BASIS OF HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IS A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

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ONE PLANET SOLUTIONS

Better choices can be made and practical solutions do exist

WWF's "One Planet Perspective" outlines better choices for managing, using and sharing natural resources within the planet's limitations – so as to ensure food, water and energy security for all.

PRESERVE NATURAL CAPITAL
restore damaged ecosystems, halt the loss of priority habitats, significantly expand protected areas

PRODUCE BETTER
reduce inputs and waste, manage resources sustainably, scale-up renewable energy production

CONSUME MORE WISELY
through low-Footprint lifestyles, sustainable energy use and healthier food consumption patterns

REDIRECT FINANCIAL FLOWS
value nature, account for environmental and social costs, support and reward conservation, sustainable resource management and innovation

EQUITABLE RESOURCE GOVERNANCE
share available resources, make fair and ecologically informed choices, measure success beyond GDP

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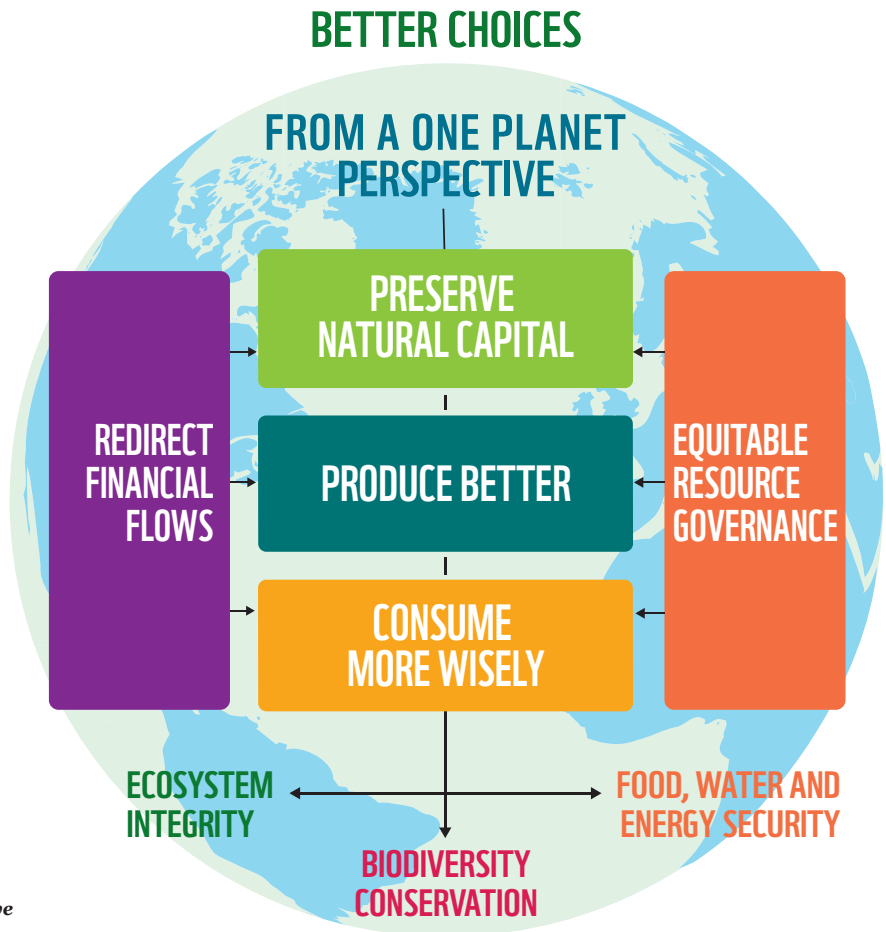

Figure 13: One Planet Perspective *(WWF, 2012).*

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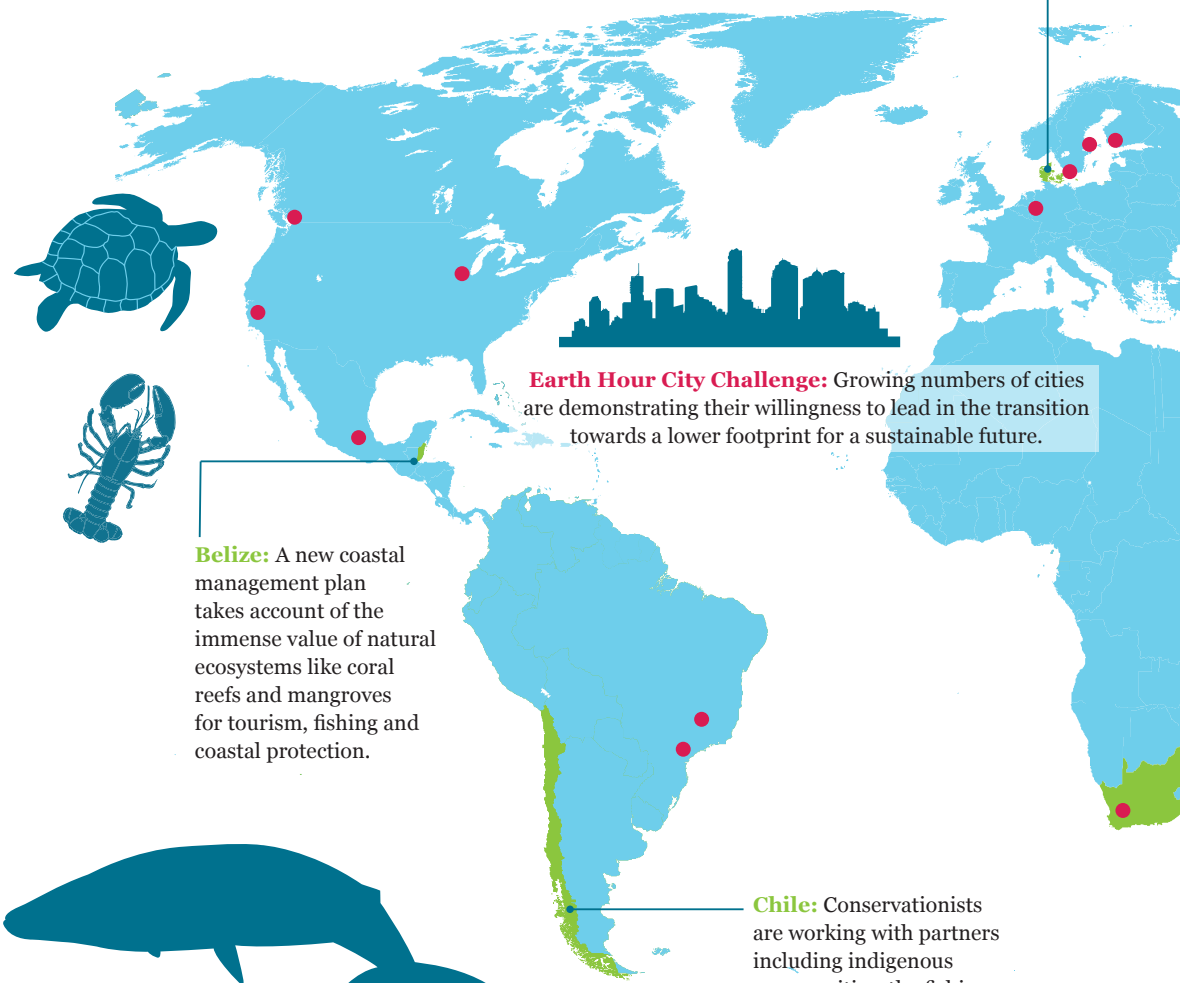
THE ONE PLANET PERSPECTIVE IN ACTION

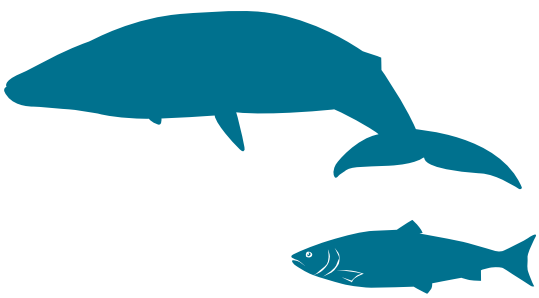
Read these case studies and more at wwf.panda.org/lpr

Denmark: Wind power provided for 57.4% of Denmark's electricity consumption in December 2013 – the result of several decades of innovation and supportive policies.

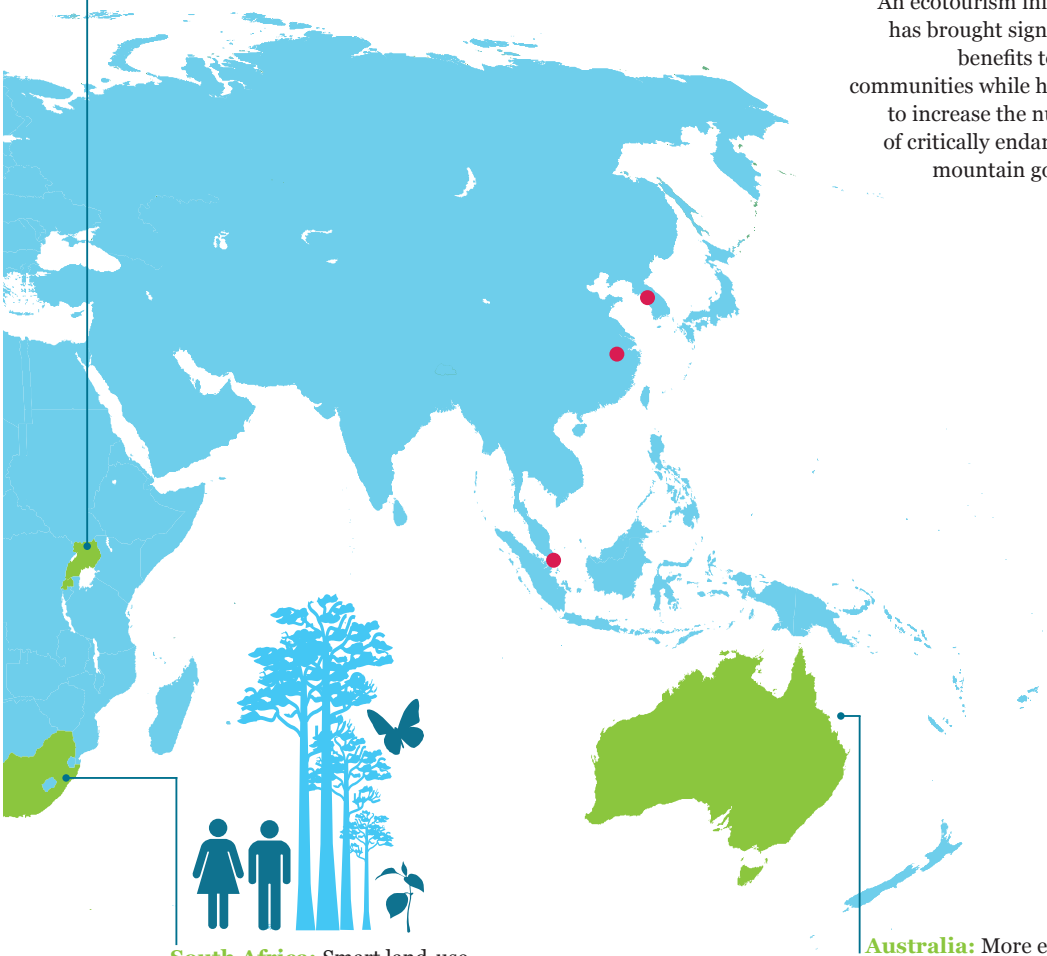


Earth Hour City Challenge: Growing numbers of cities are demonstrating their willingness to lead in the transition towards a lower footprint for a sustainable future.

Belize: A new coastal management plan takes account of the immense value of natural ecosystems like coral reefs and mangroves for tourism, fishing and coastal protection.



Chile: Conservationists are working with partners including indigenous communities, the fishing and aquaculture industries, government, and the finance and retail sectors to protect one of the world's most important marine ecosystems.



Rwanda/Uganda: An ecotourism initiative has brought significant benefits to local communities while helping to increase the number of critically endangered mountain gorillas.

South Africa: Smart land-use planning has helped restore a critical wetland, allowing commercial tree plantations and a World Heritage Site to thrive side by side.

Australia: More efficient sugar farming practices are helping to conserve the Great Barrier Reef by reducing the impact of chemical and soil run-off.

LEAPING INTO THE FUTURE

DRC has one of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in the world. But what sort of future is in store for these children, from the fishing village of Vitshumbi on the southern shores of Lake Edward?

Virunga National Park is their inheritance – and it offers huge potential. A recent study commissioned by WWF suggests that, in a stable situation where the park is properly protected, its economic value could be more than US$1 billion a year. Responsible development of industries like tourism within the park could provide jobs for 45,000 people.

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THE PATH AHEAD

The same indicators that show where we have gone wrong can point us onto a better path

There is nothing inevitable about the continuing decline in the LPI, or growing our ecological overshoot. They are the sum of millions of decisions, made with little or no consideration of the importance of protecting our natural world: poor governance at local, national and international levels; policies with a myopic focus on economic growth and narrow interests; business models that focus on short-term profits and fail to account for externalities and long-term costs; inefficient, outmoded and unnecessarily destructive ways of generating and using energy, catching fish, raising food, transporting goods and people; desperate strategies for earning a livelihood; excessive consumption that makes few happier or healthier.

In each case, there is a better choice. Changing our course and finding alternative pathways will not be easy. But it 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 "Our Common Vision", the place we need to aim for. It can be seen in the global sustainable development quadrant – the currently unoccupied territory where everyone is able to enjoy a high level of human development with an Ecological Footprint that is within global biocapacity (Figure 8). This is essentially the same space envisioned in the Oxfam Doughnut – the "safe, just operating space" that stays within planetary boundaries while ensuring that everyone achieves an acceptable level of health, well-being and opportunity (Figure 11).

WWF's One Planet Perspective (Figure 13) gives an idea of how we might reach it, through a series of practical actions: we need to divert investment away from the causes of environmental problems and towards the solutions; to make fair, far-sighted and ecologically informed choices about how we manage the resources we share; to preserve our remaining natural capital, protecting and restoring important ecosystems and habitats; to produce better and consume more wisely.

WE KNOW WHERE WE WANT TO BE
WE KNOW HOW TO GET THERE
NOW WE NEED TO GET MOVING

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See LPR 2014 for a comprehensive list of references and sources for all data in this summary.

WWF Associates

Fundación Vida Silvestre (Argentina)
Pasaules Dabas Fonds (Latvia)
Nigerian Conservation Foundation (Nigeria)

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LIVING PLANET REPORT 2014

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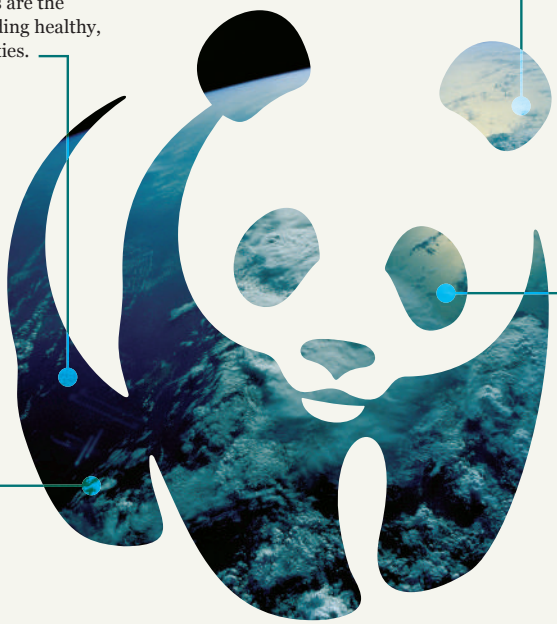
SPECIES

Populations of vertebrate species have fallen by half since 1970, according to the *Living Planet Index*.

PLACES

From forests to rivers to reefs, natural ecosystems are the foundation of building healthy, resilient communities.



PEOPLE

Our needs, our well-being and our prosperity depend on nature.

SPACES

With humanity currently demanding 1.5 planets' worth of resources, pressure on ecosystems is increasing.

WWF

Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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