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NATIONAL

A third of the world's plant and animal species could be gone in 50 years, study says

By Maddie Capron

February 12, 2020 4:55 PM | Gift Article



An introduction to the causes of modern-day climate change, signs that the climate is already changing, and how climate change affects the environment and human well-being. By McClatchy

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One-third of all plant and animal species on Earth [could face extinction in the next 50 years](#), experts say.

A new study from the University of Arizona predicts that one in three species of plants and animals could face extinction by 2070 because of climate change.

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Researchers used data from hundreds of species to produce their findings, EurekAlert! said in a news release. They looked at local extinctions that have happened and analyzed data from 538 species and 581 places around the world in the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

“By analyzing the change in 19 climatic variables at each site, we could determine which variables drive local extinctions and how much change a population can tolerate without going extinct,” Cristian Román-Palacios, a researcher on the project from the University of Arizona, said in the news release. “We also estimated how quickly populations can move to try and escape rising temperatures. When we put all of these pieces of information together for each species, we can come up with detailed estimates of global extinction rates for hundreds of plant and animal species.”



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Many species are able to tolerate some temperature increases, but they can only do that up to a certain point. The projection of how many species could be lost to climate change really depends on how much the climate will warm in the future, the experts said.

“In a way, it’s a ‘choose your own adventure,’” John J. Wiens, another researcher on the project, said in the news release. “If we stick to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change, we may lose fewer than two out of every 10 plant and animal species on Earth by 2070. But if humans cause larger temperature increases, we could lose more than a third or even half of all animal and plant species, based on our results.”

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