

Global bird extinctions are increasing warns new research

Title

The rate of bird extinctions is accelerating at an alarming rate according to a new paper by BirdLife International and Charles Darwin University. *Global Patterns and Drivers of Avian Extinctions at the Species and Subspecies Level*, published in PLoS One, reveals 279 bird species and subspecies from across the globe have become extinct in the last 500 years. The study shows that species extinctions peaked in the early 20th century, then fell until the mid-20th century, and have subsequently accelerated. "Until this study it had been hoped the rate of extinction was slowing", said lead author Dr Judit Szabo of Charles Darwin University. "Historically most extinctions have occurred on islands, particularly those in the Pacific, but most of the really susceptible species are long gone." The study shows that the destruction of native habitat for agriculture is currently the main cause of extinctions. Unsustainable hunting and the introduction of alien species, such as cats and rats, have been the main causes of extinctions in the past. "Humans are directly or indirectly responsible for this loss", Dr Szabo said. The world's nations had agreed through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to slow biodiversity loss by 2010, and having failed to reach this goal, the target has now been adjusted to 2020. Report co-author Dr Stuart Butchart, BirdLife International's Global Research Coordinator, said many species survive only because of conservation interventions. "This list would have been much longer were it not for the work being done around the world to stop extinctions. But we need to scale up our efforts substantially to avoid further human-induced extinctions", said Dr Butchart. "Our analysis provides the most detailed picture to date of recent extinctions and will help us identify strategies to tackle the loss of biodiversity and halt future human-induced extinctions. The Conference of the Parties of the CBD that starts today in Hyderabad, India will need some firm action to achieve its target of achieving this by 2020."