



June 4, 2019

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chair
Committee on Science, Space & Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space & Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas:

On behalf of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and our membership across the nation and around the world, thank you for holding today's important hearing, "Nature in Crisis: Biodiversity Loss and its Causes" to examine the recent scientific report on biodiversity by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

IFAW has 17 offices globally and works in more than 40 countries around the world. We use fresh thinking and bold action to innovate solutions for tough conservation challenges – including human-wildlife conflicts and illegal wildlife trafficking – that support animals, people, and the place we call home. Recognizing the unbreakable link between animals and human wellbeing, we support and engage with communities, learn from them, and when necessary empower them to coexist with and value native wildlife and companion animals; we also help communities develop tools to protect their natural heritage.

Healthy, biodiverse ecosystems are fundamentally necessary to human health and wellbeing; they provide a bulwark against catastrophic events, increase our resilience, and serve as an insurance policy against future loss. Unfortunately, wildlife and wild lands are in peril around the world. Trafficking in wildlife and wildlife parts remains the fourth most

lucrative criminal enterprise worldwide. And IPBES has sounded a dire warning with the release of its landmark Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The comprehensive report, authored by more than 145 experts from 50 countries over three years, cautions that “1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history”. This unprecedented threat to biodiversity makes all of us more vulnerable.

However, at IFAW we see reasons for hope. Every day, our global society comes to better understand the complex interconnectedness of human activities with our biosphere. As the IPBES report points out, sometimes our actions have a predictable, direct effect on biodiversity, as in humanity’s over-exploitation of species – think the hunting of elephants for ivory, rhinoceros for “medicines” and trinkets, tigers for skins and “medicines”, and sharks for fins, for example. In other cases, the effects are secondary, but perhaps no less predictable: land consumption can lead to habitat loss and species decline. Through international cooperative agreements like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) we have made strides to stem some of the global threats to biodiversity.

Here in the United States, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) remains a cornerstone of conservation that has helped to protect as many as 99% of protected species from extinction, in spite of decades of constrained funding. The ESA, which continues to enjoy strong support from constituents across the nation, recognizes the value of animals and plants to humanity, and has succeeded in steering us on a more balanced path between consumption and conservation.

The IPBES report reminds us that, whatever our successes, we must not be complacent. We urge this committee to meet new and emerging challenges with courage and determination, and with science- based solutions that will enhance conservation objectives, ecosystem resilience, and peaceful coexistence between humans and native wildlife. If we invest wisely now in resilient and sustainable transportation strategies, clean energy, and wildlife-friendly infrastructure, we can make inroads against threats to global biodiversity and preserve healthy ecosystems and wildlife populations for ourselves and for generations to come.

IFAW thanks the Committee for this opportunity to share our thoughts for the record. The IPBES report is a timely call to action: we have only one planet, and human beings must learn that we are only a part of the greater whole. If we cannot coexist with other species, we will not continue to exist at all. But if human behavior can cause great harm to our ecosystems, we are fortunate that so too can considered changes in human behavior begin the healing process. We look forward to working with this committee to ensure a bright future for America, our global neighbors, and this planet we all call home.

Sincerely,

Kate Wall



Senior Legislative Manager