

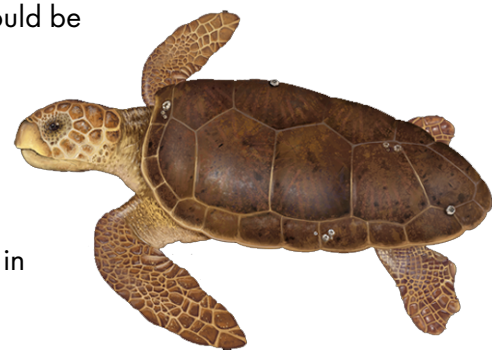


THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY: CLOSING IN ON WILDLIFE

Fossil-fueled climate change is causing widespread harm to wildlife across the planet. Intensifying climate hazards — from heat waves, stronger storms, and flooding to rising seas and melting sea ice — are putting wildlife in increasing danger. Many animals and plants are struggling to find food, losing their habitat, being forced to move and facing new diseases. As the dual emergencies of climate and extinction accelerate, up to one-third of animal and plant species could be wiped out in the next 50 years without stronger climate action.

Emperor penguins are the only penguin species to breed and raise chicks on sea ice during harsh Antarctic winters. As that ice disappears or breaks up early due to climate change, entire colonies are declining or vanishing altogether. In some cases sea ice has broken up before chicks were ready to swim, resulting in the drowning deaths of thousands. Without help nearly all emperor penguin colonies could be gone by 2100.

Ancient animals named after their large heads, **loggerhead sea turtles** have declined by half in the past 50 years. As global temperatures rise, higher sand temperatures on the beaches where they're born have been lethal to eggs or even changed the sex of the hatchlings. Rising seas and climate-intensified storms have flooded turtle nests or washed them away. Hotter oceans have also forced changes in migration and feeding.



Koalas are being hit hard by climate change as hotter, drier conditions make water scarce and reduce the nutrition and increase the toxins in their eucalyptus leaf food. Widespread bush fires in 2019 and 2020, made larger by climate change, burned millions of acres and killed or injured koalas in many regions of southeast Australia. The koala population declined by about a third between 2018 and 2021, and the New South Wales population could be extinct by 2050.

Pacific walrus are losing the Arctic sea ice they need year-round for courting, giving birth, nursing their young and resting. As summer sea ice disappears over their feeding grounds, walrus mothers and calves have been forced ashore in huge numbers. Once on shore, they have limited access to food, are vulnerable to attacks by predators, and have suffered mass trampling events that have killed thousands of walrus.





American pikas are adapted to colder climates of the high-elevation mountains in western North America. Hotter summer temperatures can cause pikas to die from overheating and reduce the time they can spend gathering food in alpine meadows. Declines in insulating snowpack over the boulder fields where they spend their winters can cause pikas to die from cold snaps. Lower-elevation pika populations have been disappearing in large parts of the American West.

Atlantic puffins are struggling to find food as hotter ocean temperatures and more marine heat waves make herring and other prey scarcer. When adults can't provide enough food, their chicks starve to death or are forced to leave the nest burrows small and malnourished. Harsher storms and heavier rains are flooding puffin burrows, killing chicks with cold. Atlantic puffin numbers have plummeted by 70% over the past 50 years in Iceland, where nearly two-thirds of the global population breeds.



Coral reef ecosystems are the rainforests of the ocean, supporting a quarter of marine life. They're being decimated by increasingly frequent and severe bleaching events from ocean heating, overlaid with stress from ocean acidification. In the Caribbean Sea, once-abundant **elkhorn corals** have died off by 95%, largely due to outbreaks of white-band disease driven by heat stress from rising ocean temperatures. They are now functionally extinct in Florida.

Small, colorful **harlequin toads** favor higher, cooler elevations in Central and South America. They've been hit hard by the spread of the deadly chytrid skin fungus, fueled by rising temperatures from climate change. Many amphibians are becoming "climate captives," unable to move very far to escape rising temperatures, reduced rainfall, and increases in heatwaves and drought. Climate change is now the most common cause of declines in more than 40% of amphibians.



In 2024 **howler monkeys'** deep roar was replaced by the sound of them smacking the ground, falling dead from the trees. More than 300 howler monkeys died in southern Mexico due to heatstroke. A heatwave aggravated by climate change sent temperatures surging over 113F, overcoming the monkeys with dehydration and exhaustion. Monkeys that survived were given ice and intravenous drips by rescuers. Howler monkeys play a crucial role in seed dispersal and maintaining rainforest biodiversity.

Symbols of strength and power, **Asian elephants** are actually very sensitive to heat and vulnerable to heat stroke. The risk of death of Asian elephant calves under the age of five doubles on hot days, but all ages are at risk. Heat stroke is now a leading cause of death for Asian elephants in Myanmar. Without climate action, experts predict that temperature rise over the next few decades could push Asian elephants in Myanmar to extinction.

