

WORLD

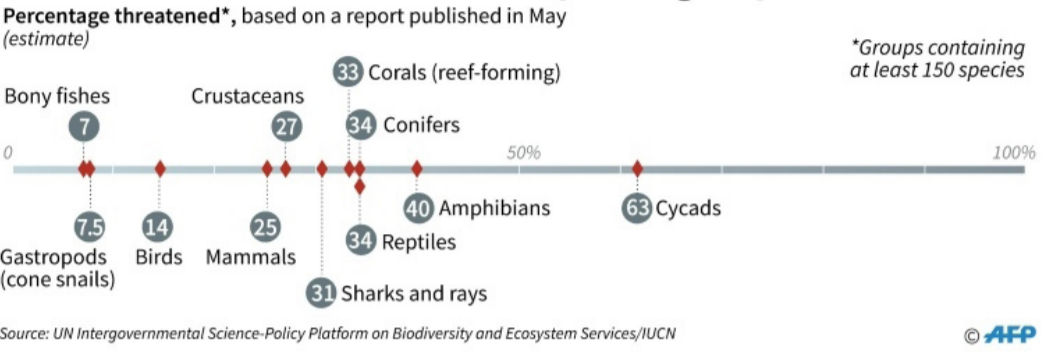
Protect 30pc of planet by 2030: UN Nature rescue plan

● The proposal will be vetted by nearly 200 countries gathering in October

● Last year, the first UN "state of Nature" report in two decades found that one million species of plants and animals face extinction



Global extinction risk: selected species group



Over the last century, our species has crowded, eaten, poached and poisoned many species to the brink of extinction, and pushed some over the edge

Paris

Thirty percent of Earth's surface across land and sea should become protected areas by 2030 to ensure the viability of ecosystems essential to human wellbeing, according to a UN plan released yesterday.

The draft proposal to halt the degradation of Nature and the gathering pace of species loss will be vetted by nearly 200 countries gathering in October for a make-or-break biodiversity summit, the 15th since 1994.

Up to now, UN targets to safeguard or restore ecosystems have failed for lack of political backing, implementation and

enforcement.

But the need for action has never been so urgent: last year the first UN "state of Nature" report in two decades found that one million species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction.

Across the board, humanity has been the culprit. Even in recent decades, Homo sapiens have crowded, eaten, poached and poisoned many species to the brink of oblivion, and pushed others over the edge.

Last week, for example, scientists declared the freshwater Chinese paddlefish -- which thrived for 200 million years -- extinct.

Global warming has also begun to take a toll, with far worse impacts on the not-so-distant horizon, experts say.

"This is an incredibly important year to address the crisis facing Nature and climate," said Costa Rica's energy and environment minister, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez.

"They are two sides of the same coin and we must address both crises aggressively."

The so-called "zero draft" report calls for carving out at least 30 per cent of land and sea areas, with at least 10pc under strict protection, to conserve biodiversity hot spots.

The proposed figures are to be

negotiated at the UN-led talks, a process similar to the one that yielded the Paris climate treaty.

'Paris moment' for biodiversity

Indeed, conservationists hope the October meeting in Kunming, China, will be a "Paris moment" for biodiversity which has received far less attention -- and money -- than global warming.

Experts and environmentalists welcomed the plan's cornerstone target, but remained sceptical as to whether the political will exists to make sure it is met.

"This is an ambitious proposal," said Aleksandar Rankovic, coordinator for post-2020 in-

ternational biodiversity governance at IDDRI, and Paris-based environmental policy think tank.

But two previous attempts to set 10-year goals came to naught, he pointed out.

"The zero draft represents a solid step towards a master plan for halting global biodiversity loss in this new decade," said Li Shuo of Greenpeace East Asia.

But the proposal is "thin on the relevant enabling conditions, such as an implementation mechanisms and resource mobilisation."

"Only outlining 'where we need to be' is not enough. We have to equip the vision with 'how do we actually get there,'"

he added.

Brian O'Donnell, head of Campaign for Nature, approved of the 30pc target but wondered what was to become of the rest if only 10pc falls "under strict management."

The plan also calls for Nature-based solutions to climate change such as reforestation, protecting wetlands and soil restoration, suggesting they could account for "at least 30pc of efforts to achieve the Paris Agreement targets" over the next 30 years.

The spread of invasive species, and pollution from pesticides and plastic, should be reduced by 50 percent by 2030, the proposal suggests.

Lebanon regains UN voting rights after paying arrears

United Nations | United States

Lebanon regained its voting rights at the United Nations after paying outstanding dues it owed the international body.

"Lebanon has just made a payment. With this payment Lebanon's voting rights have been fully restored," said Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

According to a diplomatic source, Lebanon paid \$1.3 million. "Lebanon paid its dues that were delayed (a) few days

because of the current situation in Lebanon," Amal Mudalali, the country's ambassador to the UN, wrote on Twitter Monday.

"Lebanon is not under article 19 anymore," she added, referring to a UN provision that allows the body to strip a member state of voting privileges if they have fallen behind on financial contributions.

The UN on Friday said that crisis-hit Lebanon was among seven countries that would lose the right to vote in the General Assembly because of a failure to pay dues.

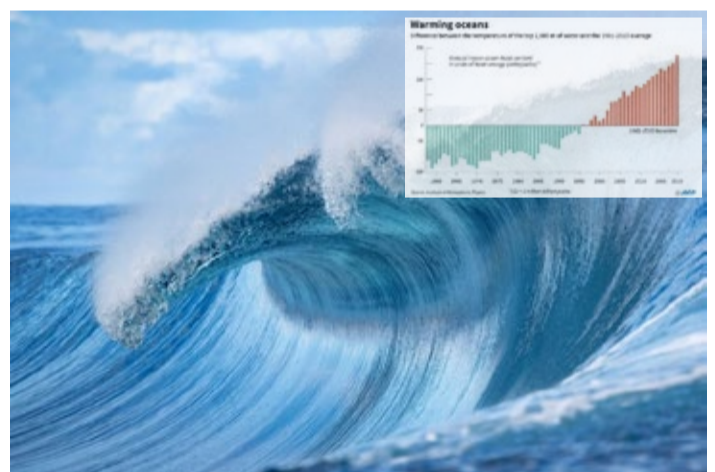
Oceans were hottest on record in 2019

Paris

The world's oceans were the hottest in recorded history in 2019, scientists said yesterday, as manmade emissions warmed seas at an ever-increasing rate with potentially disastrous impacts on Earth's climate.

Oceans absorb more than 90 percent of excess heat created by greenhouse gas emissions and quantifying how much they have warmed up in recent years gives scientists an accurate read on the rate of global warming.

A team of experts from around the world looked at data compiled by China's Institute



of Atmospheric Physics (IAP) to gain a clear picture of ocean warmth to a depth of 2,000 metres over several decades.

They found that oceans last year were by far the hottest ever recorded and said that the effects of ocean warming were already being felt in the form of more extreme weather, rising sea levels and damage to marine life.

The study, published in the journal *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*, said that last year the ocean was 0.075 Celsius hotter than the historical average between 1981-2010.

That means the world's oceans have absorbed 228 Zetta Joules (228 billion trillion Joules) of energy in recent decades.

Seven billion years: Scientists say oldest solid material found

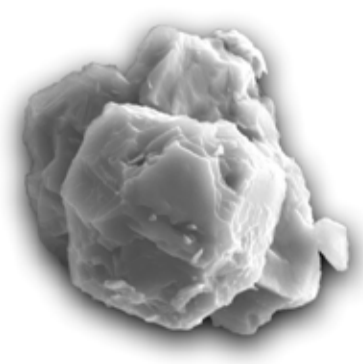
Washington

Researchers said yesterday that new techniques have allowed them to identify the oldest solid material ever found on earth.

The stardust, formed five to seven billion years ago, came from a meteorite that fell to Earth 50 years ago in Australia, they said in a paper published in the journal *PNAS*.

It came down in 1969 in Murchison, Victoria state, and scientists from Chicago's Field Museum have possessed a piece of it for five decades.

Philipp Heck, curator of meteorites at the museum, examined pre-solar grains, which are bits of stardust that became trapped in meteorites, making them time capsules of the period before the sun was born.



A scanning electron micrograph of a presolar silicon carbide grain

"They're solid samples of stars, real stardust," Heck said in a statement.

When the first stars died after two billion years of life they left behind the stardust, which formed into the block which

date these grains, which are microscopic in size. They are from silicon carbide, the first mineral formed when a star cools.

To separate the ancient grains from the relatively younger ones, scientists crushed fragments of the meteorite into a powder. Then they dissolved it in acid, which left only the pre-solar particles.

"It's like burning down the haystack to find the needle," says Heck.

When dust is in space it is exposed to cosmic rays which slowly change its composition. This allows researchers to date it.

A decade ago, only 20 grains from the meteorite were dated by a different method. Now, researchers have been able to determine the age of 40 grains, most of which are between 4.6

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We basically came to the conclusion that there must have been a time in our galaxy when more stars formed than normal, and at the end of their lives they become dust producing

PHILIPP HECK, CURATOR OF METEORITES

as old as seven billion years.

"These are the oldest solid materials ever found, and they tell us about how stars formed in our galaxy," Heck said.

The new dating by this team confirms an astronomical theory which predicted a baby boom of stars before the formation of our sun, instead of a constant rhythm of star formation.

"We basically came to the conclusion that there must have been a time in our galaxy when more stars formed than normal, and at the end of their lives they become dust producing," Heck said.

The task now is to apply the same method on other meteorites.

But according to Heck, there are fewer than five known to be in collections and big enough to give up such secrets.

billion and 4.9 billion years old.

These ages correspond to the moment when the first stars began to break up, and since that type of star lived for two to 2.5 billion years, the stardust can