

## Discuss Ideas and Challenges of 'Half-Earth'

### Think about it!

Name three of the biggest threats to the survival of species worldwide?

### Introduction

Recent estimates place the current global rate of extinction at "[100 to 1,000 species lost per million per year, mostly due to human-caused habitat destruction and climate change.](#)"<sup>1</sup> How do we combat species extinction? In this excerpt from Science Friday, Dr. E.O. Wilson discusses his book *Half-Earth*, in which he lays out a controversial plan to protect 50 percent of the earth as nature reserves. According to the World Bank, approximately [14 percent](#)<sup>2</sup> of terrestrial and [12 percent](#)<sup>3</sup> of marine territory are currently protected from human intervention.

### Vocabulary

mass extinction- "[...abnormally large numbers of species die out all at once or within a limited time frame.](#)"<sup>4</sup>  
biodiversity- variety of living things in an area, or in this case, on earth as a whole.  
nature preserve- a protected area for wildlife, plants and animals, and in some cases areas of geologic importance.

### Note-worthy

Write down information from the radio excerpt and article that you want for your discussion or writing piece.

<sup>1</sup> Dell'Amore, Christine. "Species Extinction Happening 1,000 Times Faster Because of Humans?" National Geographic. 30 Oct. 2014. <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/05/140529-conservation-science-animals-species-endangered-extinction/>>.

<sup>2</sup> "Terrestrial Protected Areas (% of total land area)." World Bank Data Catalog. <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ER.LND.PTLD.ZS/countries?display=graph>>

<sup>3</sup> "Marine protected areas (% of territorial waters)." World Bank Data Catalog. <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ER.MRN.PTMR.ZS/countries/1W?display=graph>>

<sup>4</sup> "Big Five Mass Extinction Events." BBC Nature. 2016. <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/extinction\\_events](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/extinction_events)>

**Discussion Questions**

*Use the boxes below to record thoughts and interesting ideas during your group discussion.*

Do you think it's possible to set aside half the earth as protected nature reserves? Why or why not?

The areas that Wilson proposes we protect may be inhabited by humans. Some think that this proposal would displace indigenous people who have lived in remote areas for eons. What do you think? Should that change the actions we choose to take? How?

Think about your community/region. How would creating larger nature reserves in your area benefit or harm the people living there?

GENERATE IDEAS: What are some alternative approaches to the “half-earth” idea that would still address the issue of species extinction?

GENERATE IDEAS: What areas of earth would you set aside for conservation that currently aren't protected? Why?

**Writing Prompt**

According to some estimates, humans have increased the rate of species extinction to “[100 to 1,000 species lost per million per year](#).”<sup>5</sup> Such a drastic decrease in biodiversity threatens all life, including ours. Take a position of support or opposition towards E.O. Wilson’s “half-earth” proposal. If you support his proposal, be sure to address the issues of key stakeholders who might be negatively impacted. If you oppose his proposal, explain what you think should be done instead to protect biodiversity and why.

*Ideally writing responses should:*

- Contain a clear claim that states the position of the writer on the issue.
- Support claim with evidence from media.
- Address the counterclaim.
- Provide some ideas for ways to pursue your idea.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

<sup>5</sup> Dell'Amore, Christine.