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REPORT



# One-third of global protected land is under intense human pressure

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Science 18 May 2018:  
Vol. 360, Issue 6390, pp. 788-791  
DOI: 10.1126/science.aap9565

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## Protected yet pressured

Protected areas are increasingly recognized as an essential way to safeguard biodiversity. Although the percentage of land included in the global protected area network has increased from 9 to 15%, Jones *et al.* found that a third of this area is influenced by intensive human activity. Thus, even landscapes that are protected are experiencing some human pressure, with only the most remote northern regions remaining almost untouched.

Science, this issue p. **788**

## Abstract

In an era of massive biodiversity loss, the greatest conservation success story has been the growth of protected land globally. Protected areas are the primary defense against biodiversity loss, but extensive



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Vol 360, Issue 6390  
18 May 2018

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against biodiversity loss, but extensive human activity within their boundaries can undermine this. Using the most comprehensive global map of human pressure, we show that 6 million square kilometers (32.8%) of protected land is under intense human pressure. For protected areas designated before the Convention on Biological Diversity was ratified in 1992, 55% have since experienced human pressure increases. These increases were lowest in large, strict protected areas, showing that they are potentially effective, at least in some nations. Transparent reporting on human pressure within protected areas is now critical, as are global targets aimed at efforts required to halt biodiversity loss.

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13 July 2018

Vol 361, Issue 6398



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