Mangrove forests are one of the world’s most threatened tropical ecosystems

More than 35% of the world’s mangroves are already gone. The figure is as high as 50% in countries such as India, the Philippines, and Vietnam, while in the Americas they are being cleared at a rate faster than tropical rainforests.

Threats to mangrove forests and their habitats include:

* **Clearing:** Mangrove forests have often been seen as unproductive and smelly, and so cleared to make room for agricultural land, human settlements and infrastructure (such as harbours), and industrial areas. More recently, clearing for [tourist developments](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/problems/tourism/tourism_pressure/), shrimp[aquaculture](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/problems/aquaculture/), and salt farms has also taken place. This clearing is a major factor behind mangrove loss around the word.

* **Overharvesting:** Mangrove trees are used for firewood, construction wood, wood chip and pulp production, charcoal production, and animal fodder. While harvesting has taken place for centuries, in some parts of the world it is no longer sustainable, threatening the future of the forests.

* **River changes:** [Dams and irrigation](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/about_freshwater/freshwater_problems/infrastructure/) reduce the amount of water reaching mangrove forests, changing the salinity level of water in the forest. If salinity becomes too high, the mangroves cannot survive. Freshwater diversions can also lead to mangroves drying out. In addition, increased erosion due to land deforestation can massively increase the amount of sediment in rivers. This can overcome the mangrove forest’s filtering ability, leading to the forest being smothered.

* [**Overfishing**](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/problems/problems_fishing/)**:** The global overfishing crisis facing the world’s oceans has effects far beyond the directly overfished population. The ecological balance of food chains and mangrove fish communities can also be altered.

* **Destruction of**[**coral reefs**](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/coasts/coral_reefs/)**:** Coral reefs provide the first barrier against currents and strong waves. When they are destroyed, the stronger-than-normal waves and currents reaching the coast can undermine the fine sediment in which the mangroves grow. This can prevent seedlings from taking root and wash away nutrients essential for mangrove ecosystems.

* [**Pollution**](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/problems/pollution/)**:** Fertilizers, pesticides, and other toxic man-made chemicals carried by river systems from sources upstream can kill animals living in mangrove forests, while oil pollution can smother mangrove roots and suffocate the trees.
* [**Climate change**](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/problems/climate_change/): Mangrove forests require stable sea levels for long-term survival. They are therefore extremely sensitive to current rising sea levels caused by global warming and climate change