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Earth could lose third of all animal and plant species in our lifetimes, scientists warn

By Harry Pettit, The Sun
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The common giant tree frog from Madagascar is one of many species impacted by recent climate change.

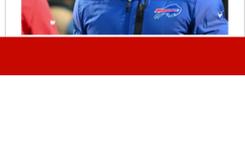
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After combining this data with predictions of Earth's future climate, scientists made a grim discovery.

Based on current projections, as many as one in three of Earth's eight million plant and animal species could be gone within the next 50 years.

Species were more likely to go extinct at locations that regularly hit their maximum annual temperatures -- the hottest daily highs in summer.

As global temperatures rise due to climate change, many of the planet's key habitats are expected reach these maximums more frequently.

It's down to humanity to tackle global warming if Earth's ecosystems are to be saved, researchers said.

The first step would be for nations to stick to the Paris climate deal, which in 2015 saw 195 countries set goals to keep global warming under 1C from current levels.

"In a way, it's a 'choose your own adventure,'" said University of Arizona scientist Professor John J. Wiens.

"If we stick to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change, we may lose fewer than two out of every 10 plant and animal species on Earth by 2070. But if humans cause larger temperature increases, we could lose more than a third or even half of all animal and plant species, based on our results."

The study was published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Last year, a similar study from the UN reported that one million of the planet's eight million species were threatened with extinction.

Up to 680 vertebrate species -- that's any animal with a spine -- have been driven to extinction by humans since the 16th century, researchers warned.

To make things worse, figures showed that rates of species extinction were speeding up.

It led to warnings that humanity was driving the sixth mass extinction event in Earth's history.

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