

Untouched ocean habitats rapidly shrinking, says study

Time to act: Improvements in shipping technology mean that even the most remote areas may come under threat in the future, warn experts. | Photo Credit: [Art Wager](#)

Shipping, pollution and overfishing have reduced areas of “wilderness” to just 13% of the world’s oceans, a study showed on Friday, warning untouched marine habitats could completely vanish within half a century.

International researchers analysing the impact of human activity, from fertiliser runoff to increased sea transport, on underwater ecosystems have mapped the dwindling zones considered pristine. The bulk of remaining ocean wilderness, classed as “mostly free of human disturbance”, was found in the Arctic and Antarctic, and around remote Pacific islands.

“Improvements in shipping technology mean that even the most remote wilderness areas may come under threat in the future, including once ice-covered places that are now accessible because of climate change,” said lead researcher Kendall Jones, from the University of Queensland.

Just 5% of the wilderness areas are in protected zones, leaving the rest vulnerable, according to the study published in the journal *Current Biology*. It called for greater international coordination to regulate the world’s oceans, clamp down on overfishing, limit destructive ocean-mining and reduce sediment runoff. “Marine wilderness areas are home to unparalleled levels of life, holding massive abundances of species and high genetic diversity, giving them resilience to threats like climate change,” said James Watson of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

“These areas are declining catastrophically, and protecting them must become a focus of environmental agreements. If not, they will likely disappear within 50 years.”

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The green panel also directed National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) to install display boards at a gap of 100 kilometres.

The study is the first to show natural selection due to hurricane

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