

## **NASA images reveal disappearing mangroves worldwide**

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In August NASA and the US Geological Survey released the [first-ever satellite analysis](#) of the world's mangrove ecosystems. What they found was dire: mangroves covered 12.3% less area than previously estimated. Now, NASA has released images of the world's mangrove ecosystems (see below), which currently cover 137,760 square kilometers. Yet this number keeps shrinking: mangroves are vanishing rapidly due to rising sea levels, deforestation for coastal developments, agriculture and aquaculture.

Among the world's most important ecosystems, mangroves are tropical saline-adapted forests that survive in tropical coastlines. These forests serve as nurseries for a variety marine fish, underpinning global fisheries and providing additional food for coastal communities. In addition, they store massive amounts of carbon and act as buffers against marine erosion. Recent studies have even found that mangroves buffer human populations and property against tropical storms. During the devastating 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, regions with mangroves suffered less damage than those without. In all it has been estimated that mangroves provide at least \$1.6 billion in ecosystem services annually. Yet despite their importance, less than 7% of the world's mangroves are under legal protection.

Known as a center for rainforest destruction, Indonesia has also lost most of its mangroves (see second image below). From 1982 to 2000, Indonesia has lost over half of its mangrove forests, falling from 4.2 million hectares to 2 million.



Global extent of mangrove ecosystems. Image courtesy of NASA and the US Geological Society. [Click to enlarge.](#)



Extent of mangroves in Southeast Asia. Image courtesy of NASA and the US Geological Society. Click to enlarge.

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