

Koalas could be extinct within 50 years

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The koala has become a symbol of Australia's sad record of species decline and could be extinct within 50 years, conservationists say.

A study of dwindling species in the Indo-Pacific region paints a bleak future for the koala.

The 2012 Living Planet Report, by the conservation group WWF, says species in the region have declined by 64 per cent since 1970 – the worst of all the world's regions.



File Photo / Supplied

WWF Australia ecologist Dr Martin Taylor says that if the rate at which koalas are vanishing is not curbed, they could be extinct within 50 years.

Australia's threatened species are still in decline, a recent biodiversity assessment has shown, demonstrating existing conservation efforts are inadequate.

Dr Taylor says last week's federal budget offered little cause for optimism, with a "miserable" 0.5 per cent of spending earmarked for conservation investment.

He says the move to price carbon will help pay for carbon farming and biodiversity initiatives, but more must be done.

"There needs to be a much more thorough change in the way we conduct agriculture, in the way we conduct business generally, to stop the escalating threats to native wildlife," he said.

The Living Planet Index found a 30 per cent decrease in abundance of species populations worldwide since 1970.

It offers 16 priority solutions to enable the planet to live within its means, including reducing consumption and redirecting financial flows.

– AAP