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## Media Release



### EDS concerned that New Zealand is leading the world into the sixth extinction

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“Our precious biodiversity is under extreme pressure, from a whole range of threats,” said EDS’s Senior Policy Analyst, Dr Marie Brown.

“This month Gerardo Ceballos and co-authors demonstrated that the world’s sixth major extinction event is underway. The other five were caused by asteroid strikes and massive volcanic eruptions. This one is different. It is caused by humans.

“Back in 2010, Corey Bradshaw and co-authors showed that New Zealand had the highest proportion of threatened species among 228 countries. This is not an area we want to be world leaders in,” said Dr Brown.

“Our numbers are deeply worrying. 74% of our native freshwater fish, 85% of our lizards and 100% of our frogs and bats are threatened with extinction.

“In our recent book, we explain why New Zealand’s biodiversity loss is so bad, and getting worse. *Vanishing Nature: facing New Zealand’s biodiversity crisis* describes a new wave of extinction underway here. It is driven not exclusively by rats, stoats and possums, but by habitat clearance and over-exploitation.

“It’s not that the predators and weeds have gone away. Their impacts continue, and will likely to cause more extinctions unless New Zealand greatly scales up its pest control efforts.

“But many formerly common populations are now dwindling primarily because their habitats are being reduced to tiny fractions of their recent former extent (e.g. many skinks and geckos).

“We argue that this new wave is a consequence of weak environmental legislation that affords no particular protection to the great majority of species and their habitats.

“This stems from powerful private and corporate vested interests dominating the political discourse and capturing our regulatory agencies so that the effectiveness of regulation, policy and plans is undermined.

“Just two days ago, the New Zealand Sea Lion was reclassified from Vulnerable to Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The primary threat to Sea Lions is that of fishing – directly through bycatch and indirectly through competition for prey.

“Vested interests have again won out, while a seriously imperilled species marches toward extinction. New Zealand must urgently examine how it is fulfilling its role as steward of our precious biota.

“To really turn the trends around for biodiversity, we need fundamental reform including novel economic institutions designed to bring divergent public, private and government interests towards alignment. We propose a range of solutions to do this such as progressive taxes and payments for ecosystem services.

“Without some hard-thinking and a step up from simply business-as-usual, more species will become increasingly threatened until they go extinct,” said Dr Brown.