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Biodiversity threatened by increasing mountain forest loss

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Mountain forests are currently experiencing severe losses in many parts of the world because they are sensitive to climate change and anthropogenic pressures. However, the distribution of the world's mountain forest loss and how it has changed in the 21st century remain unclear. Here, we conducted a global analysis on mountain forest loss by using multiple high-resolution remote sensing datasets. Our results show that the total forest loss over global mountains during 2001–2018 was 78 million ha (7% of the mountain forest area in 2000) and that annual mountain forest loss tripled by 2016. Spatially, the largest loss area occurred in the tropical and boreal mountain forests, particularly in Southeast Asia, Russia, and Canada. We find many mountain regions with considerable losses in forest cover are also biodiversity hotspots, suggesting these areas need more attention and require protection. Our findings indicate that the interaction of mountain forest changes and biodiversity impact should be incorporated into future impact assessments.