



July 17, 2023

Re: House Natural Resources Committee Hearing on the Endangered Species Act at 50

Dear House Natural Resources Committee Member,

Nearly 50 years ago, President Nixon signed what has become one of the world's most successful conservation laws—the U.S. Endangered Species Act. In a short but powerful statement, Nixon declared:

Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed. It is a many-faceted treasure, of value to scholars, scientists, and nature lovers alike, and it forms a vital part of the heritage we all share as Americans. I congratulate the 93d Congress for taking this important step toward protecting a heritage which we hold in trust to countless future generations of our fellow citizens. Their lives will be richer, and America will be more beautiful in the years ahead, thanks to the measure that I have the pleasure of signing into law today.¹

Since its enactment in 1973, the Act has saved countless imperiled species from extinction and has put hundreds more on the road to recovery. Thanks to the Endangered Species Act, iconic species like the humpback whale, bald eagle, and snail darter are still with us today. And along the way it has protected millions of acres of forests, mountains, rivers, deserts, beaches and oceans—as well as the fragile, fascinating and interconnected web of life. Simply put, it is our most powerful tool to combat the extinction crisis and stem the loss of biodiversity currently facing our country and the global community.

The Endangered Species Act is also incredibly popular with the American public, which overwhelmingly supports the law. Nine out of 10 Americans support protections for endangered species and the Act, recognizing the importance of preserving our nation's biodiversity.

Today's hearing should be a celebration of the Act's stunning record of success. Instead, anti-wildlife members of Congress are doing everything they can to undermine the law and shove species closer towards extinction. So we face a choice. We can starve and emaciate this landmark law to the point of uselessness and rob future generations of wolves, bears, turtles, and sage grouse, or we can protect and strengthen the Act, continuing to save the natural world around us for another 50 years and honoring our commitment to save each and every species from the oblivion of extinction.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Kurose
Senior Policy Specialist
Center for Biological Diversity

¹ Richard Nixon, Statement on Signing the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/255904>

A PROMISE TO THE WILD:

THE
ENDANGERED
SPECIES ACT

50 YEARS OF
EXTRAORDINARY
SUCCESS



OUR CHANGED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

The largest animals to have ever lived on Earth, blue whales were nearly wiped out in the 20th century during the merciless days of industrial whaling. In just a blink of human history, we almost lost these mighty giants forever because of our indifference to the natural world around us. But 50 years ago, we decided on a different path.

Today, thanks to the protections of the Endangered Species Act, blue whales now arrive faithfully every year to feast on krill in the Santa Barbara Channel and thrill whale-watchers eager to catch a glimpse of this nearly 200-ton animal suddenly emerging from the depths of the ocean.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, humankind's most successful law for protecting animals and plants from extinction. The Act has prevented the extinction of roughly 300 species since its passage. More than 99% of the species under its care have been saved or are on the road to recovery.

The Act is the reason there are bald eagles on the wing from coast to coast, grizzly bears roaming the Rocky Mountains, sea turtles swimming in the ocean, American alligators sunning in the Southeast, whooping cranes flying across the Great Plains, and black-footed ferrets playing in the intermountain prairies.

Passed nearly unanimously by Congress and signed by President Nixon on December 28, 1973, the Endangered Species Act marked a key inflection point in our history and culture — a moment when we collectively decided that we would go to any length to save wildlife from extinction.

The law boasts a stunning record of success. And along the way it has protected millions of acres of forests, mountains, rivers, deserts, beaches and oceans — as well as the fragile, fascinating and interconnected web of life.

The Endangered Species Act has also become a beacon for other countries in their pursuit to protect what's wild and remains a crucial tool for grassroots organizations taking action on behalf of

wildlife when political systems fall short. Scientists, activists, wildlife lovers and nonprofits have secured Endangered Species Act protections for nearly 1,000 animals and plants and protected more than a half-billion acres of critical habitat to ensure that our nation's most imperiled species have places to recover and thrive.

This work is far from over — we still face the possibility of losing 1 million species in the coming decades from threats like climate change — but the Endangered Species Act still shows the best path forward for saving life on Earth for the next 50 years and beyond.

50 YEARS AGO

In the years leading up to the Endangered Species Act's passage, people's devastating impacts on the natural world were becoming increasingly clear. Decades of habitat destruction, exploitation, pesticides, pollution and other threats were pushing formerly common species like the grizzly bear, bald eagle, American alligator and Florida manatee toward extinction.

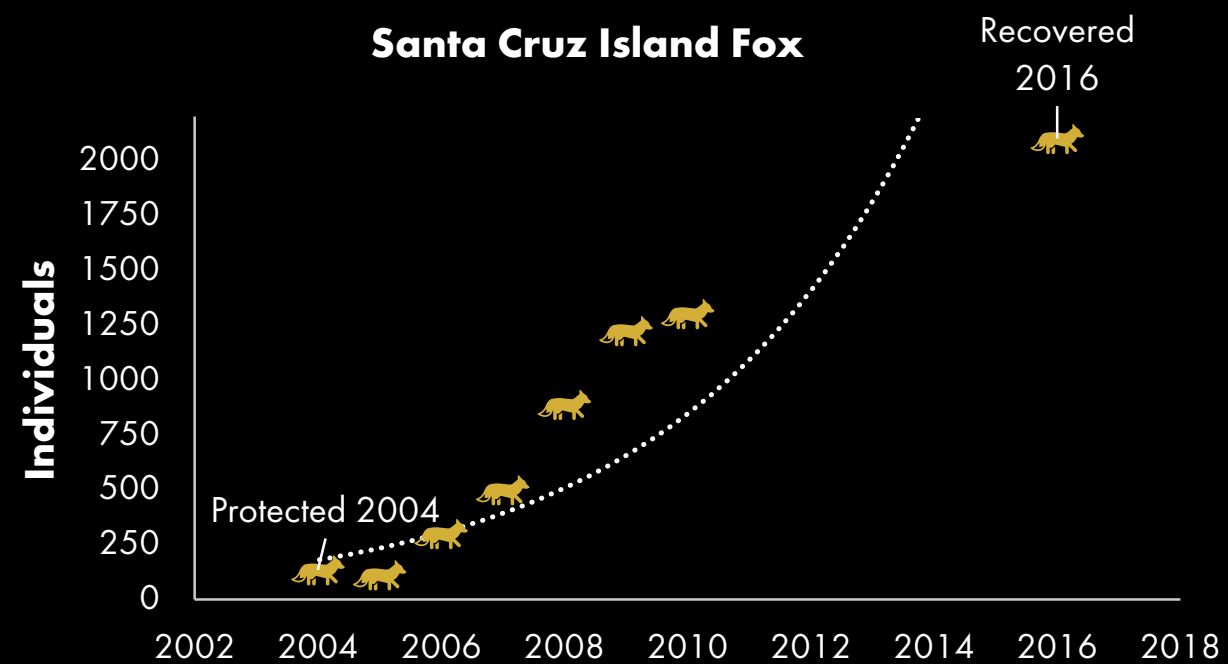
Recognizing that the value of our natural heritage is "quite literally, incalculable," Congress almost unanimously passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973 with a profound sense of urgency. Upon signing the law, President Nixon declared:

"Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed. It is a many-faceted treasure, of value to scholars, scientists, and nature lovers alike, and it forms a vital part of the heritage we all share as Americans. I congratulate the 93rd Congress for taking this important step toward protecting a heritage which we hold in trust to countless future generations of our fellow citizens. Their lives will be richer, and America will be more beautiful in the years ahead, thanks to the measure that I have the pleasure of signing into law today."

A SPEEDY RECOVERY FOR CHANNEL ISLAND FOXES

One of the only carnivores endemic to California, these diminutive island foxes are distinguishable from foxes on the mainland through 16,000 years of evolution — ever since they found their way to the modern-day Channel Islands during the last ice age. In the 1990s, though, four of the six subspecies, each one found only on its own island, nearly went extinct because of a sudden invasion of nonnative golden eagles, diseases introduced by domestic dogs, and habitat loss caused by development and nonnative animals like feral pigs. They were put on the endangered species list in 2004.

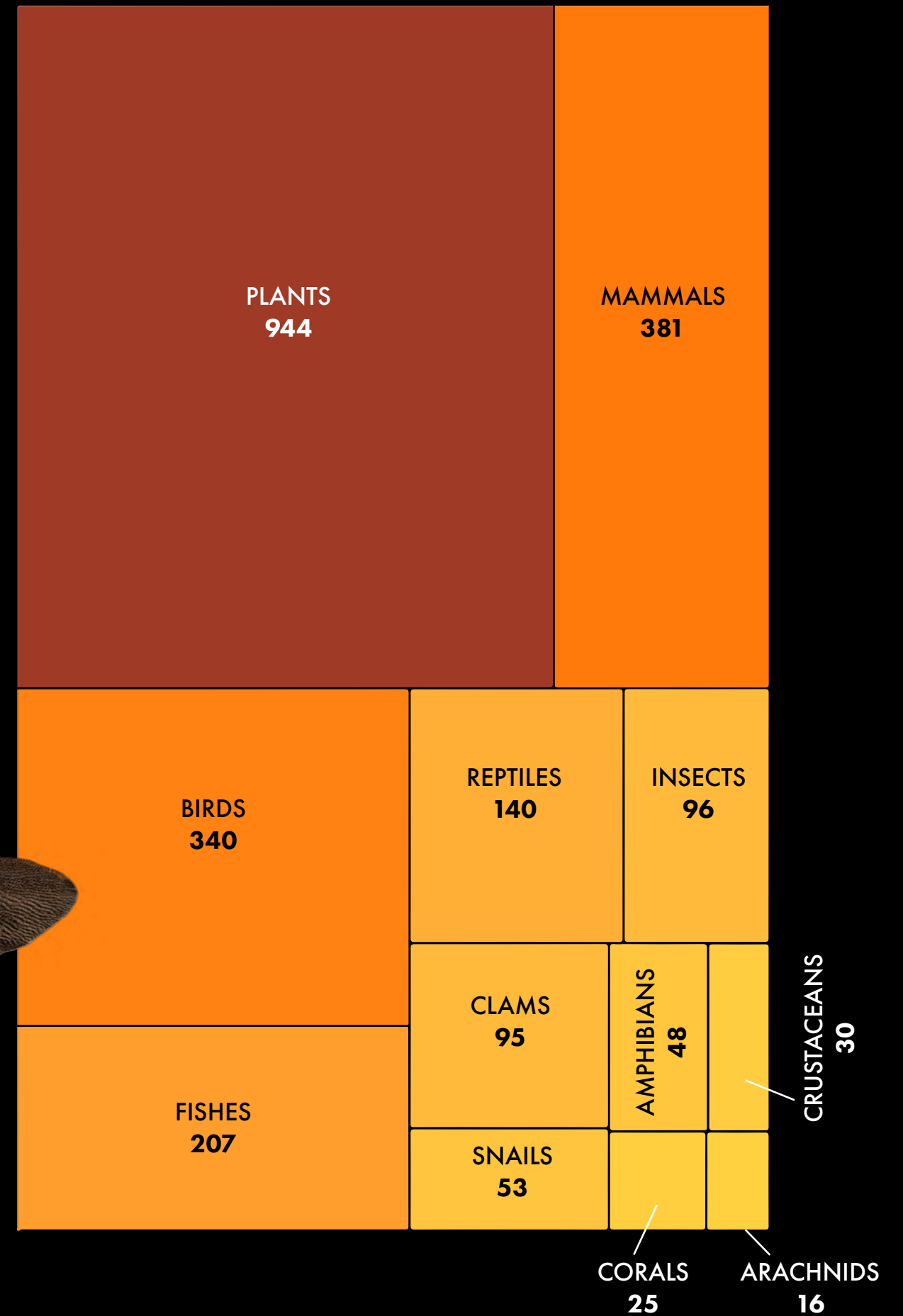
Thanks to ambitious recovery efforts — including captive-breeding programs, relocating golden eagles off the islands, and allowing for the return of bald eagles through reintroductions and efforts to remove nonnative species — the foxes of San Miguel, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz islands staged an incredible comeback. These three subspecies of fox were taken off the endangered list in 2016, marking the fastest recovery for any protected mammal in the United States. Island foxes on Santa Catalina Island, the only island with a permanent human population, are still listed as a threatened species but continue to slowly increase in population as they move closer to recovery.



PROTECTING THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE

Whether cute or charismatic, sharp and pointy, or slimy and slippery, if a species is in danger the Endangered Species Act is there to help. The Act protects species from every taxon from coast to coast and beyond. That includes everything from the Socorro isopod, a tiny crustacean no bigger than a grain of rice found in New Mexico, to the steamboat buckwheat in Nevada, the dwarf wedgemussel in Connecticut, the rusty patched bumblebee in the Midwest, the amber darter in Georgia, the Pacific pocket mouse in California, and blind cave salamanders in Texas. The Act protects mountain beavers, an ancient lineage of rodent that has evolved in isolation for 5 million years, as well as the desert pupfish, a stout, ray-finned fish named for its striking resemblance to frolicking young puppies nipping at the heels of potential mates.

Protected by the Endangered Species Act in U.S.:



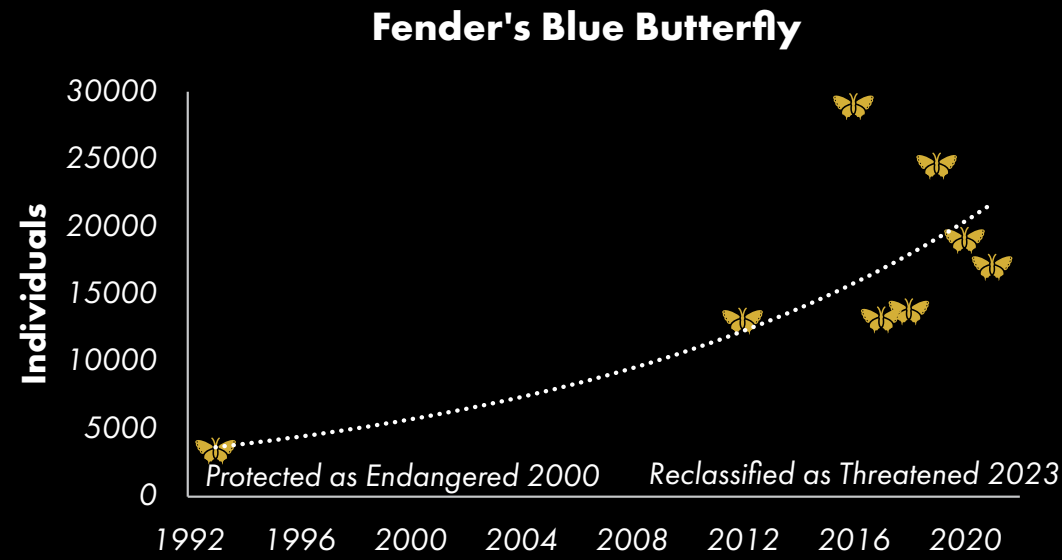
Rusty patched bumblebee
photo by USGS



FLUTTERING TOWARD RECOVERY

The tiny Fender's blue butterfly lives only in the prairie and oak savannah of Oregon's Willamette Valley. First described by scientists in 1931, it was thought to have gone extinct only a few years later. But against the odds, a small population was discovered in 1989. The butterfly was protected as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 2000, when fewer than 4,000 butterflies were known to survive in the wild.

Thanks to 3,000 acres of critical habitat that were set aside for the butterfly under the Endangered Species Act and restoration of the prairie habitat where it lives, its numbers grew to 29,000 by 2016. In 2021 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it was downlisting the species to threatened status because of its ongoing recovery. The plight of the stunning Fender's blue illustrates just how powerful the Act is at preventing extinction and giving species a fighting chance at survival.



Fender's blue butterfly photo by Noah Stryker

“WHATEVER THE COST”

You can't put a price tag on life. The Endangered Species Act recognizes that all life on Earth has intrinsic value, regardless of whether it provides any utilitarian value to humans. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld this principle in its landmark 1978 case *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill* in protecting the snail darter — a tiny, 3-inch fish — and its free-flowing habitat in the Little Tennessee River from construction of the controversial Tellico Dam. The “plain intent of Congress in enacting this statute,” the court said, “was to halt and reverse the trend toward species extinction, whatever the cost.”

As a result each federal agency has to prioritize the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered species, even above the other missions set forth for it by Congress. From the Department of Defense to the Bureau of Land Management to the U.S. Postal Service, nearly every federal agency in the government recognizes it has a role in saving our most imperiled species.



Forever stamps featuring endangered species set by the USPS

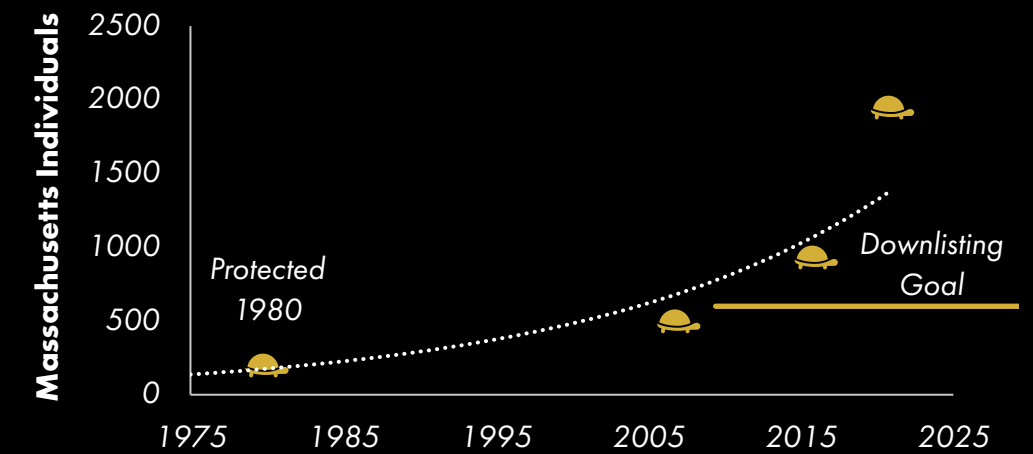
A TURTLE'S SLOW AND STEADY ROAD TO RECOVERY

Found only in ponds in eastern Massachusetts, this geographically isolated population of northern red-bellied cooters is made up of large, basking turtles who can live for more than 50 years. But hatchlings are only the size of a quarter, so they're extremely vulnerable to predators. Meanwhile suburban development and other human activities have compounded their struggles.

When the cooter was protected as endangered in 1980, just 300 individuals remained in Massachusetts; the next closest population was 200 miles away in New Jersey.

Since then more than 4,000 "head-started" hatchlings — baby turtles raised in captivity to give them an advantage to surviving into adulthood — have been released into ponds and waterways in Massachusetts. Thanks to local schools, museums and nonprofits that provide temporary foster homes to hatchling cooters, these turtles have more than a 95% survival rate. And now many of them are breeding on their own in the wild, providing new hope for these striking, long-living turtles.

Northern Red-bellied Cooters



SAVING AMERICA'S WOLVES

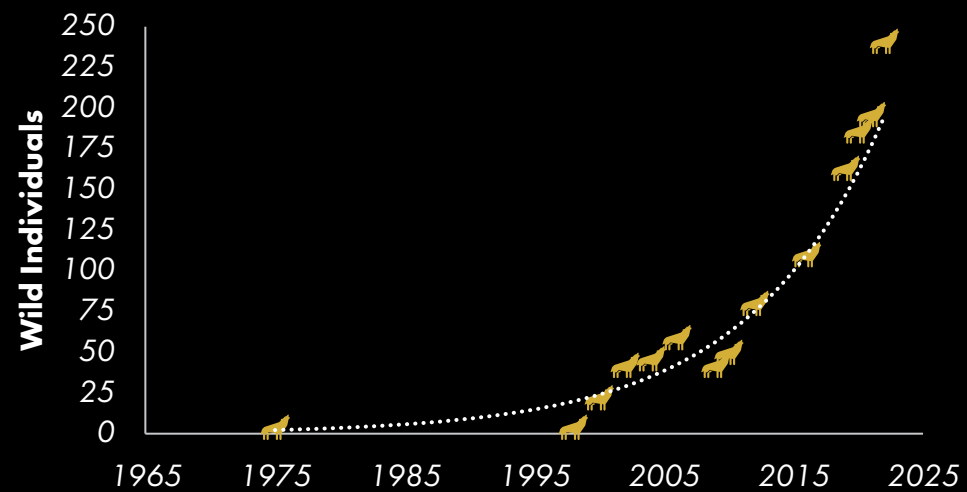
Few species exemplify the wild like the wolf. Once upon a time, as many as 2 million wolves roamed the continent. But by the early 1900s, government-sponsored, systematic persecution had nearly wiped them out in the lower 48.

The wolves' long road to recovery began with their protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1974. In the mid-1990s, gray wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho. Since then, the population has grown to several hundred in the Northern Rockies, and expanded into parts of Washington, Oregon and California. Colorado voters have even passed an initiative to return wolves to their state.

Meanwhile in the Southwest, Mexican gray wolves — also classified as endangered — are trying to stage their own comeback. In 1990 legal action by environmental organizations led to the return of the Mexican gray wolf to parts of its historic range. By 2022 the number of Mexican gray wolves had grown to nearly 250.

Wolves are top predators, and bringing them back is a crucial step toward restoring the balance of nature — of returning some semblance of the wild to our modern world.

Mexican Gray Wolf



Mexican gray wolf couple



THE RETURN OF THE BROWN PELICAN

At the beginning of the 20th century, pelicans were being slaughtered for their feathers. Appalled by this indiscriminate killing, Theodore Roosevelt created Florida's Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in 1903, the first refuge of its kind anywhere in the world. Today there are 550 national wildlife refuges across the country. These protected areas have played key roles in the recovery of many endangered species, including brown pelicans.

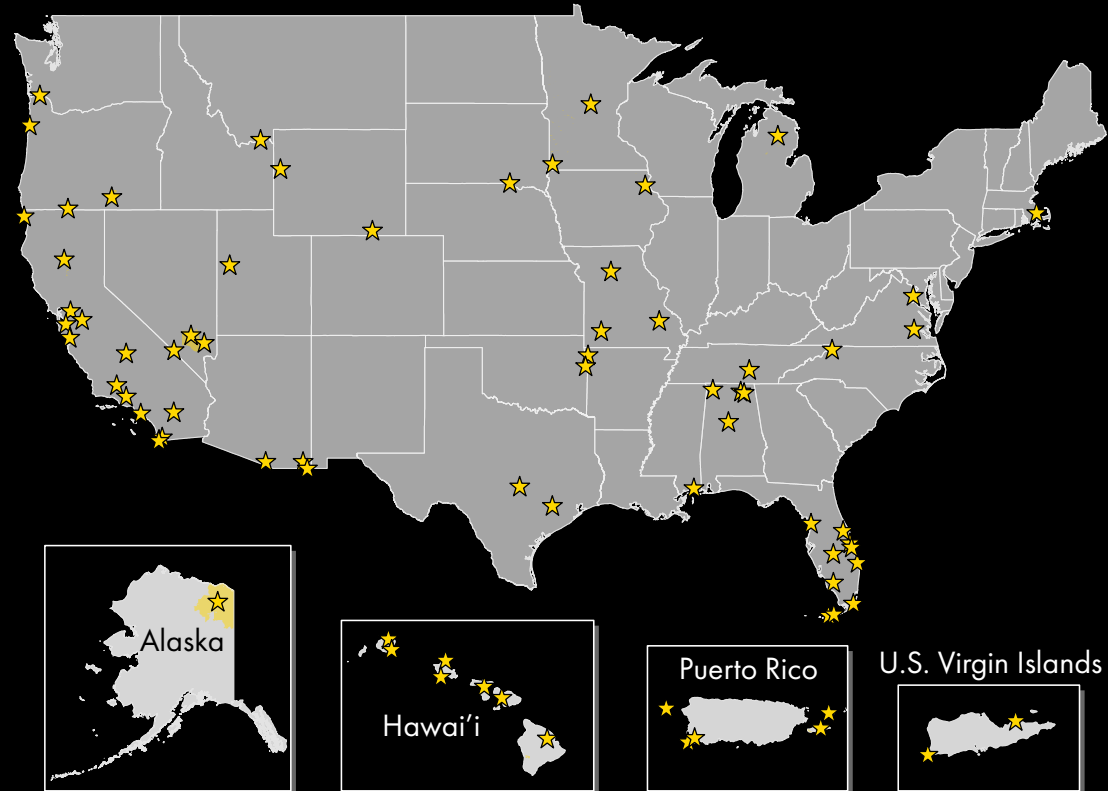
But saving these otherworldly birds required more than the refuge.

Brown pelicans were nearly wiped out once again in the second half of the 20th century with the rise of DDT and other dangerous chemicals. In 1962 Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* offered a chilling chronicle of the deadly effects of those pesticides and helped launch the modern environmental movement.

DDT was banned in 1972, and with protections under the Act, the birds began to recover once again. In 1985 brown pelicans on the Atlantic Coast and in the South became the first species declared recovered and taken off the endangered species list.

A HOME FOR EVERY SPECIES

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES ESTABLISHED FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES



You can't save species without protecting where they live — and the Endangered Species Act has spurred the protection of some of the United States' most unique and biodiverse ecosystems.

Over the past 50 years, nearly 80 national wildlife refuges have been established specifically to help save threatened and endangered species and have had remarkable success moving wildlife and plants closer to recovery.

Balcones Canyonlands Refuge in Texas protects the remaining old-growth juniper that endangered golden-cheeked warblers nest in, providing a sanctuary to these beautiful songbirds in a region where population growth and urban sprawl continue at one of the highest rates in the country. The Mortenson Lake National Wildlife Refuge supports the last known breeding population of the Wyoming toad. And the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on the Big Island of Hawai'i is a critical safeguard for the island's endangered forest birds, including the Hawai'i 'ākepa, 'akiapōlā'au, and 'i'iwi.



'i'iwi photo by Brett Haril



PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS

One of the Endangered Species Act's most visionary aspects is that the law's stated purpose is to preserve the ecosystems needed to save endangered species.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Northwest Forest Plan — hailed as one of the landmark landscape conservation plans of the 20th century — limited mature and old-growth logging and put in place environmental and habitat protections for endangered fish and wildlife, including northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, Chinook salmon and steelhead. Today the plan covers 24 million acres of public forests.

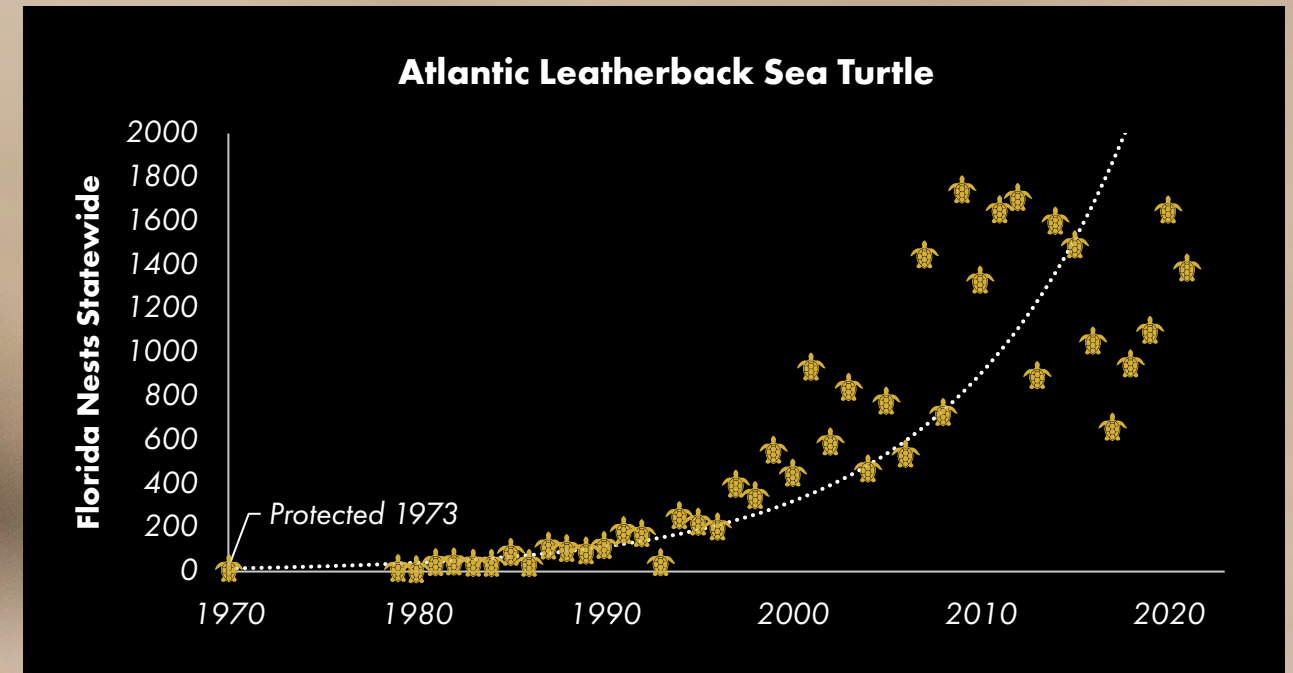
Longleaf pine forests of the southeastern United States represent some of the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems and are home to hundreds of plant and animal species, including dozens of threatened and endangered species. Longleaf pine forests are critical habitat for species like the gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker, who depend on healthy, mature forests to survive. Thanks to coordinated efforts to recover these species, 2 million acres of longleaf pine forest have been restored in the past two decades, helping to put the woodpecker on the road to recovery.

STEADFAST SEA TURTLES: THE ATLANTIC LEATHERBACK

Leatherback sea turtles are the largest living turtle species — they can grow more than six feet long and weigh over a ton — and have the largest range of any reptile on Earth. They travel across the world's temperate and tropical oceans. Sadly, global populations have declined by 40% in recent years.

The Atlantic population of leatherback sea turtles can be found along the entire East Coast, from Maine to Florida. About 50% of leatherback nesting occurs in Palm Beach County, making the Sunshine State of utmost importance to the sea turtle's recovery.

The number of leatherback sea turtle nests in Florida has increased significantly since the species was protected under the Endangered Species Act. Despite some encouraging trends, however, leatherbacks still need our help. These "living dinosaurs" face many threats, including entanglement in fishing gear, coastal development and plastic pollution.



Baby leatherback sea turtle



INTERNATIONAL REACH

The Endangered Species Act benefits wildlife around the world, including strict requirements on trade that help curb overexploitation and illegal trafficking.

The world's largest land mammals, African elephants, were first protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1978 after they were mercilessly hunted for their ivory tusks. The United States has led the way globally by tightening ivory import regulations and clamping down on domestic ivory markets.

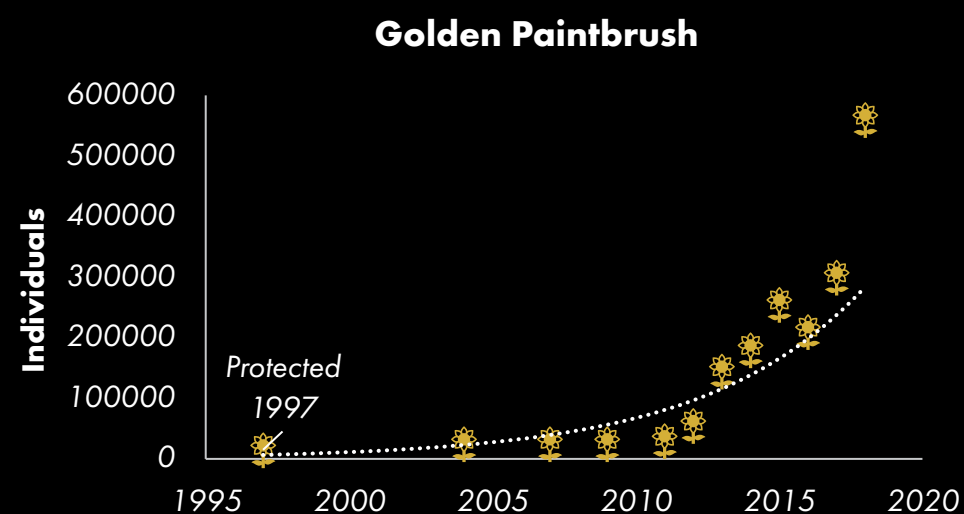
After African lions were protected under the Endangered Species Act in 2016, the United States swiftly banned imports of these big cats killed as trophies in captive-held facilities in South Africa. Lions who lived in these facilities were bred in captivity and kept in small enclosures for the sole purpose of being easily killed by trophy hunters. The ban prompted by the Endangered Species Act helped prompt South Africa to shutter these cruel facilities.

Meanwhile, in response to the decline of rhinoceros populations in Africa and Asia and tiger populations in Asia, the United States enacted the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act in 1994. The goal is to reduce the illegal trade of rhino horns and tiger body parts. The legislation provides funding for work that helps manage and conserve these species. Such projects have included reintroducing rhinos to their former ranges; conserving, restoring and managing their habitat; and strengthening local capacity and community engagement to enhance conservation programs and stewardship.

THE GOLDEN PAINTBRUSH MAKES A COMEBACK

The golden paintbrush is a short-lived perennial herb with bright yellow flowers that can grow up to a foot high and historically lived in upland prairies and grasslands from southwestern British Columbia to Oregon's Willamette Valley. The plant dwindled to just 10 populations when it was protected as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1997.

By 2021 replanting efforts had expanded the golden paintbrush to at least 48 sites with more than 560,000 plants in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. That same year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the golden paintbrush from the endangered species list, marking another success for the country's bedrock environmental law.



RESTORING FREE-FLOWING RIVERS

On July 1, 1999, more than 1,000 people watched a backhoe break the retaining wall of the Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec River. It was the very first step to restoring a wild and free river and marked the first time an active U.S. hydroelectric dam was removed to help recover an endangered species. For the first time in more than 150 years, the Kennebec River flowed freely, allowing Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon to spawn in the river once again.

Following this groundbreaking conservation intervention, two dams that had blocked fish migration for 100 years on the Elwha River were breached in 2012, allowing 11 species of Pacific salmon to return from the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Salish Sea and spawn in heart of Washington's Olympic National Park.

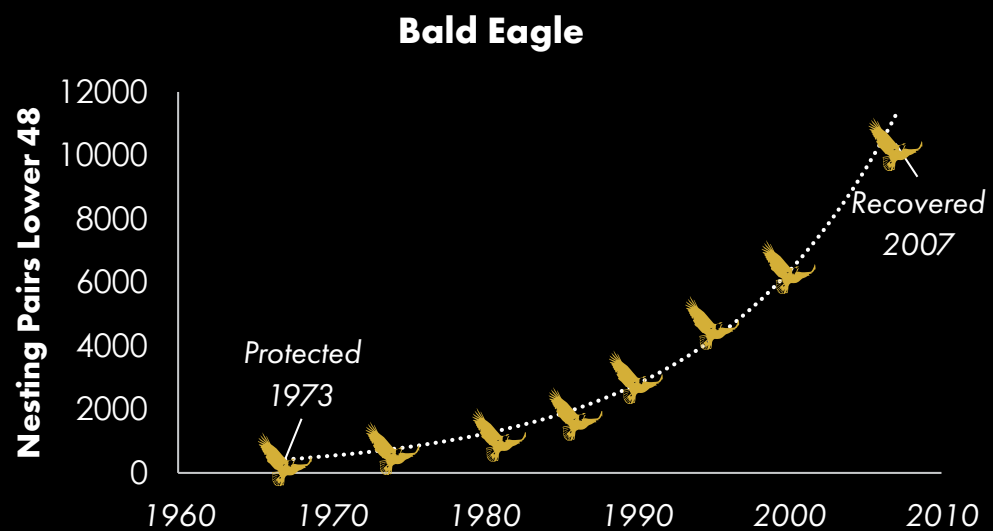
The most ambitious dam removal to protect endangered species in history will be farther south. After two decades of Tribal-led efforts, plans were approved in 2022 to demolish four dams on the lower Klamath River to protect Chinook salmon — which are culturally, spiritually and economically significant to the tribes that call the Klamath home. Spurred by a devastating fish kill in 2003 caused by the dams, the Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley and Klamath Tribes advocated tirelessly to restore the river. Every year these Tribal nations host a salmon run, tracing the 340-mile route of the salmon who had disappeared from their river.

Soon the removal of the four dams will set free a huge stretch of one of the West's most important coastal rivers for these fish and reopen 400 miles of habitat — much of which salmon have been unable to reach for more than a century.

OUR NATIONAL SYMBOL

Bald eagles, America's national symbol, were once on the brink of extinction. DDT poisoned these mighty birds when they ate contaminated fish. The chemical thinned their eggshells, leaving many so fragile they broke during incubation or failed to hatch.

Fortunately they were protected under the Endangered Species Act — and DDT was also banned. So began a decades-long, nationwide effort to restore bald eagles. Thanks to captive breeding, reintroduction programs, and a process called “hacking” — where human caretakers hand-rear baby eagles by feeding and raising them from a blind until they can survive on their own — bald eagles have made a remarkable comeback. They were removed from the endangered species list in 2007. Today there are more than 300,000 eagles nesting in every state in the nation except Hawai'i.



THE GOLD STANDARD OF CONSERVATION AROUND THE WORLD

The Endangered Species Act has led the way for nations around the world to develop their own domestic laws protecting imperiled species.

For example, Costa Rica's Biodiversity Law of 1998 recognizes the inherent value of nature and adopts the precautionary principle in its decision-making. The law embraces three objectives: biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from those resources. Today, after successfully reversing deforestation and creating a number of conservation areas, over 50% of Costa Rica's land area is covered with forests and slightly more than one-third of its land area is officially protected for wildlife.

Mexico's General Wildlife Law is the most comprehensive wildlife legislation ever enacted in Mexico. It contains general provisions protecting endangered species and their habitat, restrictions on exotic species, incentives for landowners, reintroduction and translocation protocols, law enforcement, and the ethical use of wildlife.

Norway's Nature Diversity Act recognizes that biodiversity is an intrinsic value and designates priority species who are to be safeguarded, closely monitored and given special protection. In Australia the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act protects listed animals and plants, but also unique habitats and places including heritage sites, marine areas and some wetlands. The European Union's Habitats Directive ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species, as well as the protection of 200 rare habitat types. The Directive helps set up the Natura 2000 network, the largest in the world comprised of special areas of conservation designed by European Union countries.

In the United States, 47 states have enacted state-level endangered species laws based on the federal law. Some are more comprehensive than others, but all share the foundational goal of saving rare species and affirming that nearly every state government is a partner in conservation of our nation's natural heritage. Fifty years after it was enacted, the federal Endangered Species Act remains the gold standard — simply the strongest law for protecting biodiversity passed by any nation.



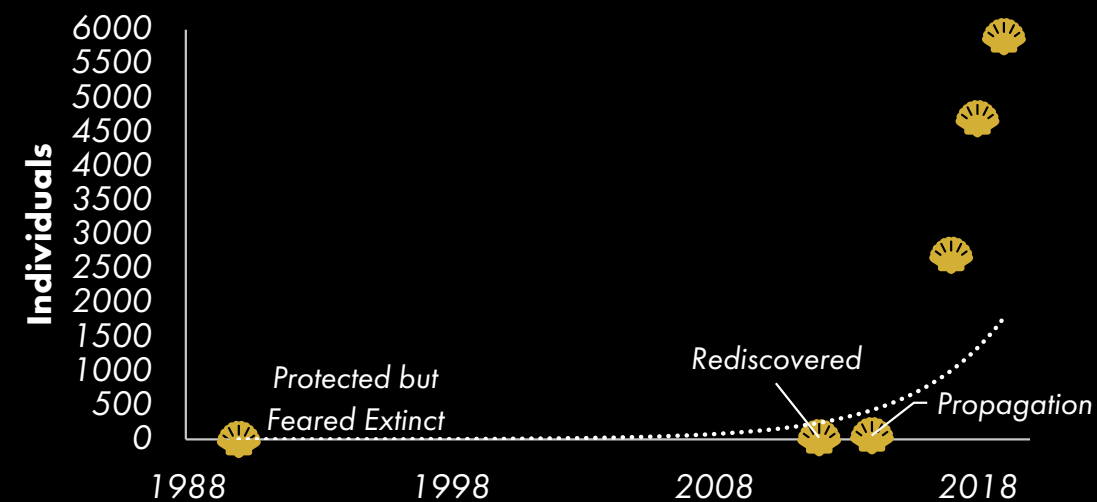
MUSSEL MEMORY

The purple cat's-paw pearly mussel was once found in the Ohio, Cumberland and Tennessee river basins. But this freshwater mussel nearly disappeared a century ago thanks to the pearl button industry, which used the shells' purple lining to make buttons. In the decades that followed, the mussel faced additional threats from dams, pollution, and the arrival of the invasive zebra mussel, all of which drove the purple cat's-paw to the brink of extinction.

By the time this colorful mussel was protected by the Endangered Species Act in 1990, only a few individuals were known to exist. In fact, the mussel was considered functionally extinct until 1994, when a small population was found in Ohio. Thanks to coordinated captive-breeding efforts by local, state and federal partners, the purple cat's-paw pearly mussel was reintroduced back into its wild habitat.

Saving the purple cat's-paw pearly mussel does more than prevent its extinction. Freshwater mussels, one of the most endangered groups of species in the United States, play a crucial role in filtering rivers and streams, preserving healthy water sources for people and preserving important habitats for other species.

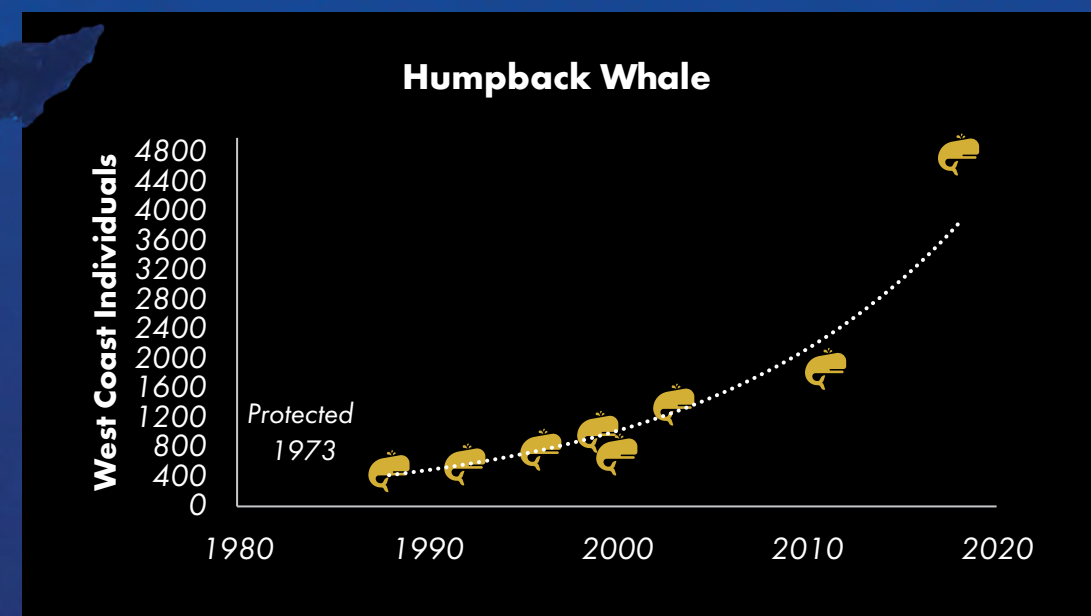
Purple Cat's Paw Pearly Mussel



SAVING THE SONG OF THE WHALE

The mighty humpback whale was nearly driven extinct a century ago by the commercial whaling industry. By 1966 the entire North Pacific humpback population had dwindled to only 1,200 individuals. Seven years later it was protected under the Endangered Species Act, kicking off an intensive, decades-long effort to save one of the rarest whales in the world. The hard work paid off: By 2010 there were an estimated 22,000 North Pacific humpback whales.

The humpback whale's extraordinary recovery is just one example of how the Act is working to save life in our oceans, from sea turtles and whales to sharks, California sea otters, corals and sturgeon. Protecting the humpback has provided secondary benefits like helping us manage our fisheries in a more sustainable way by reducing overfishing and changing the types of nets used to cut down on entanglements and bycatch. It also raised awareness of additional threats to whales like ocean noise and ship strikes. The Act remains so important today because it provides a crucial framework for adapting to emerging threats so that all species have a chance to recover and thrive.



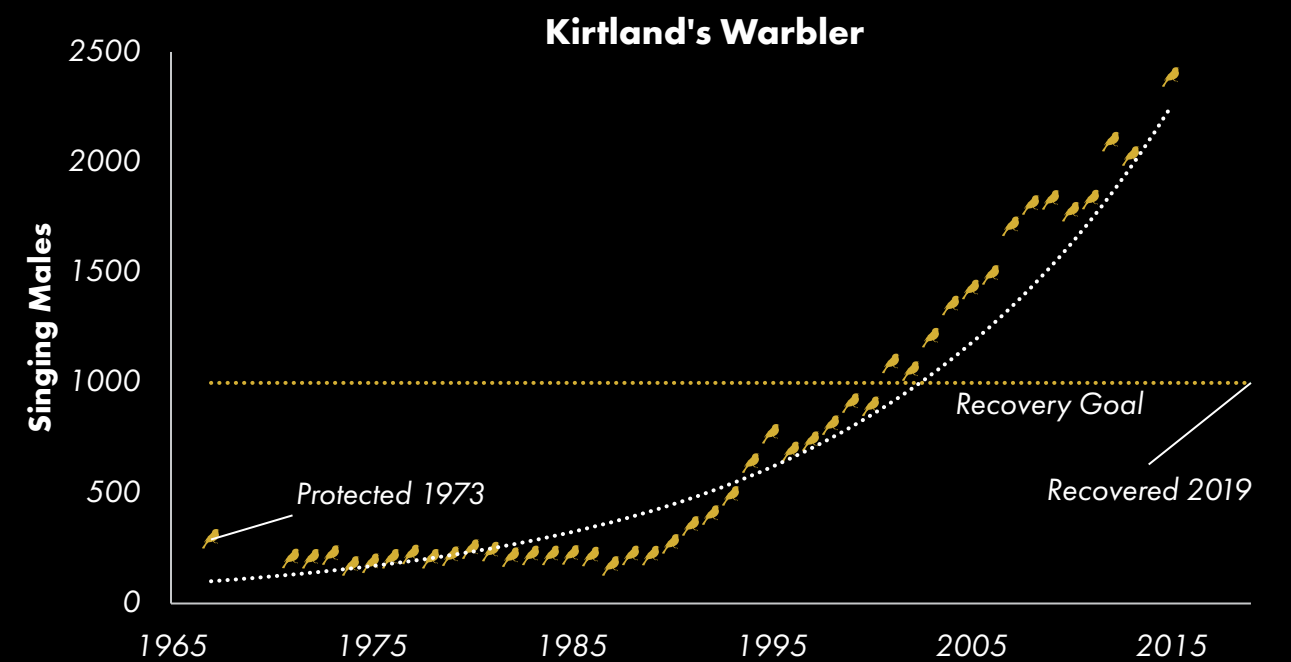
Kirtland's warbler photo by swgarnett, iNaturalist



KIRTLAND'S WARBLER: FLYING OFF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

One of the Great Lakes' signature species, the tiny Kirtland's warbler nests in young jack pine forests, primarily in Michigan. Sadly, fire suppression and the spread of nest-raiding brown-headed cowbirds decimated these beautiful songbirds, which declined to just 200 singing males before they were protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1973.

Federal protection spurred active management of the warblers' habitat through controlled burns, restoration of jack pine forests, and control of cowbirds. The warbler's population has since increased 10-fold to more than 2,300 singing males, and they have even begun to breed in Wisconsin and Canada again. While continued monitoring and management of its breeding forests is still needed, the recovery of Kirtland's warbler remains a Midwest success story.



INSPIRING WONDER

For eons our histories, myths and cultures have been inspired by wildlife. Each extinction not only unravels the natural world further but also impoverishes us and leaves the planet a lonelier place for future generations.

But the reverse is also true: Every species that has returned is a chance to reconnect with our wild world.



In 1987 the last nine California condors left on Earth were taken into captivity in a last-ditch attempt to save the species from extinction. It was a controversial action at the time, with some arguing that the immense amount of resources needed to save a species whose extinction appeared inevitable could be better used to save other species with a greater potential for recovery.

In 2004, after years of reintroductions and setbacks, the first wild condor chick hatched since before the bird was brought into captivity. Each year more and more wild chicks have hatched, and today there are more condors in the wild than there are in the captive conservation flock. Now condors can be seen flying over Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona, Zion National Park in Utah, and Pinnacles National Park in California. And they have begun to be restored to the ancestral homeland of the Yurok Tribe in Northern California.

A condor is released after testing at Pinnacles National Park, photo by Arianna Punzalan, NPS

THE NEXT 50 YEARS

Decades before the Endangered Species Act, famed conservationist Aldo Leopold wrote an essay about shooting and killing a wolf in Arizona. Leopold, shaken by what he'd done, "reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes." He quickly realized that it wasn't just the wolf's life that had been lost but the wisdom and mystery known only by the wolf and the mountains around her.

Our own wisdom came too late to save the Carolina parakeet, the Caribbean monk seal, the great auk, and scores of others driven extinct before we recognized the significance of their loss. With the signing of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, we entered into a new covenant with a singular purpose: Never again will we allow a species to vanish on our watch.

Over the past 50 years, the Endangered Species Act has done heroic work to hold together the web of life. Indeed, 99% of the animals and plants under its care have avoided extinction, and many hundreds are now on the road toward recovery. No matter where you live, our wild world is more fully alive and intact today because of the Act. It has galvanized conservation across the nation and around the world to save biodiversity in all its forms.

While the Endangered Species Act is the world's strongest conservation law, it is not perfect. It suffers from chronic underfunding by Congress. Timid bureaucrats too often balk at the bold, life-saving action that the Act requires to save species. Far too many

politicians put profits ahead of the long-term well-being of our natural world and seek to weaken the Act.

So we face a choice. We can starve and emaciate this landmark law to the point of uselessness and rob future generations of wolves, bears, turtles and sage grouse — forever dousing the "fierce green fire" that is as mysterious as it is integral to our wild world. Or we can protect and strengthen the Act, continuing to save the natural world around us for another 50 years and honoring our commitment to save each and every species from the oblivion of extinction.

The path to save life on Earth is clear. We need only the courage to choose it.



“ Nothing is more
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- PRESIDENT NIXON ON SIGNING
THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT,
DECEMBER 28, 1973



Black-footed ferret photo by
Kristy Bly, World Wildlife Fund

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BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY

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Pallid sturgeon