

The Endangered Species Act



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California condor

In Arizona, Thirty Years of Success

For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has saved many of our national treasures from extinction. Because of the act, beloved symbols of America such as the bald eagle, the gray wolf, and the California condor are thriving, and rare species such as the pygmy owl are appearing again in our desert refuges.

Only nine of the 1,800 species protected by the act have been declared extinct since its passage in 1973. Such an astonishing success rate makes the act a true symbol of our nation's commitment to protecting our natural heritage for future generations. It is also an example of the progress that can be made when communities work together to conserve their local wildlife and habitat. With the participation of communities, business and government, less than one percent of development projects reviewed under the act have been halted, proving that we can conserve wildlife without sacrificing progress. With the creation of jobs from tourism and outdoor recreation related to endangered species, it can truly be said that people all over Arizona benefit from the act.

Arizona currently has 61 endangered and threatened species (43 animals and 18 plants).

California condor

California condors are among the largest birds native to North America and have no natural predators. With a wingspan up to 9 1/2 feet—2 1/2 feet wider than Phoenix Sun basketball giant Amare Stoudemire is tall, the condors, which can live up to 60 years, were driven to near extinction by the early 1980s. Shootings, poisonings and electrocutions by power lines combined with their naturally low reproductive rate decimated the birds' population. To keep them from disappearing entirely, federal officials and nonprofit groups captured the remaining birds to launch a captive breeding program with the hope that they could be released into the wild again. Releases began in 1992 in California and in 1996 in Arizona. Today, in Arizona there are about 60 birds in the wild and an additional 70 birds in central and southern California and coastal Mexico, bringing the condor one step closer to recovery.

Mexican wolf

Three families of Mexican gray wolves were released into the mountains and woodlands of Apache National Forest in eastern Arizona in 1998. Until the release, Mexican wolves had not existed in the wild in the United States since 1970.

The reintroduced wolves are designated a "non-essential experimental" population under a provision of the Endangered Species Act that relaxes some of the act's restrictions and provides greater flexibility in managing the reintroduced animals. To build support for the reintroduction of wolves, Defenders of Wildlife established a fund to reimburse livestock owners who lose animals to wolves, and a proactive conservation fund to help ranchers implement creative solutions to keep livestock and wolves apart.

Reintroductions continue with the goal of establishing a wild population of at least 100 wolves in the 7,000-square-mile Blue Range recovery area in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico. If the wolf reintroduction in the Yellowstone ecosystem, which draws in more than \$20 million per year in additional tourism revenue, is any lesson, the wolf's return could pay off big for the state or Arizona.

Apache Trout

Of the many species of sport fish in North America, the threatened Apache trout is among the rarest. With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) help, however, the Apache trout truly has rebounded. Since 1983, the Alchey-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery complex, located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, has produced several million Apache trout for sportfishing, while the Arizona Fishery Resources Office restores habitat for wild populations. The White Mountain Apache and Arizona Fishery Resources Office have also built barriers to protect Apache trout from non-native fish and have restored habitat by restoring riverside vegetation. The most recently renovated and stocked population is the 29th of 30 populations needed to declare recovery for the species.

"After three decades, we're happy to see this fish return to its native habitat," says Daniel Parker, a White Mountain Apache tribal member and biologist with the USFWS Arizona Fishery Resources Office. "When we establish just one more stream population, we could make history."

Jaguar

Today, due to habitat loss, fragmentation and over-hunting, jaguar populations are rapidly declining and are considered endangered throughout their entire range. Though native to the United States, the American jaguar has been virtually eliminated from its entire U.S. range. Fortunately, individual jaguars continue to be documented in the mountains of Southern Arizona and New Mexico. Recent field investigations have determined that a population of jaguars remains in the northern Mexican state of Sonora, within dispersal distance of suitable habitat in the United States.

In 1997, jaguars in the United States received protection under the Endangered Species Act. At that time projects were initiated to help conserve remaining jaguars and to support their recovery. Current conservation projects are guided by the recognition that the jaguars of Mexico, New Mexico and Arizona are inextricably linked.

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Mexican wolf

Defenders of Wildlife's jaguar conservation activities focus on 1) protecting the northernmost breeding population in Sonora, Mexico, 2) identifying and protecting migratory routes from northern Mexico into the United States, and 3) identifying and protecting suitable habitat in the United States while building support among ranches and landowners to cooperate with efforts to ensure the jaguar's return. With expanded awareness, cooperation and resources, conservationists are hopeful that these binational efforts will succeed at saving the American jaguar.

Economic Benefits of Protecting Wildlife and Habitat

Ecotourism represents a huge economic force in this country. Each year, millions of Americans travel and pay to view wildlife and take in all that nature has to offer. Much of this activity takes place on the hundreds of national wildlife refuges spread across the country. Nationwide, visits to wildlife refuges generated more than \$1.3 billion in income for local and state economies and an additional \$150 million in tax revenues. Indeed, national wildlife refuges received twice as many visitors in 2004 than Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Acadia, Grand Teton and Statue of Liberty national parks combined (36.7 million vs. 18.6 million (National Park Service, 2004). And the vast majority of these visitors came from outside the area,

further testament to the ability of these special places to draw people and dollars to a region.

In Arizona alone, the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in the southwestern part of the state generated \$8.5 million in economic activity for the local area, while the Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge in the western part of the state generated \$3.6 million and the nearby Cibola National Wildlife Refuge generated an additional \$410,000, to sample just a few of Arizona's natural treasures.

For more information on protecting endangered plants and animals in Arizona and how to get involved, please call Scotty Johnson, (520) 623-9653, ext. 103. For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit www.saveesa.org.



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