



## In California, Thirty Years of Success

For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has helped prevent the extinction of our national treasures. Because of the act, beloved symbols of America such as the bald eagle and the California condor are thriving, and species such as the least Bell's vireo, once thought extinct in the Central Valley, are appearing again due to habitat conservation efforts.

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 California benefit from the act.

California currently has 309 endangered and threatened species (130 animals and 179 plants).

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### California Condor

As North America's largest soaring bird, the California condor is one of our nation's most famous endangered species. California condors once ranged along the entire Pacific coast from British Columbia to Baja California, but by 1985 only nine wild birds still survived, prompting scientists to capture the remaining birds in an attempt to breed them in captivity and save them from extinction.

Captive breeding programs at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, the Los Angeles Zoo, and The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey have yielded more than 200 condor chicks. In 1992, the first captive-bred condors were released in Sespe Condor Sanctuary in Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Additional release sites have been established since then in central California, Arizona and the Baja region of Mexico. These birds have made great strides in regaining their place in the wild. Although they remain critically endangered, they are now beginning to reproduce on their own in the wild. Currently the wild population numbers approximately 130, including nearly 60 in California.

The small and growing population of California condors living today exists thanks to the condor breeding programs and recovery teams made possible by the Endangered Species Act. Without these heroic efforts and the act's protections the California condor would likely be extinct.

## Chinook Salmon

Butte Creek in California's Central Valley is the heart of the successful effort to save endangered spring Chinook salmon. This popular fish, which lives in the sea but travels up rivers and streams to spawn every spring, once numbered in the hundreds of thousands in the Sacramento area. Today



Chinook salmon

fewer than 10,000 adults on average return to area waterways each spring.

In 1992, the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service convinced the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to require Pacific Gas and Electric to release more water in the reach of Butte Creek below its hydropower project. Thanks to this increase in water, the spring Chinook population went from a low of 750 fish in 1992 to some 7,500 adults that returned to Butte Creek three years later. The 1998 runs coincided with the implementation of a cooperative restoration effort that included the removal of four dams and the elimination of at least 12 unscreened water diversions in Butte Creek. These efforts restored 25 free-flowing miles to the creek and Chinook runs have been on the rebound ever since.

The Chinook's rebound has helped California's economy. California lost more than \$500 million in business revenue and over \$1 billion in net profits because of declines in salmon and steelhead stocks,

according to the California Department of Fish and Game. With full implementation of a salmon and steelhead restoration plan, total net profits could reach \$6 billion, with \$1 billion in business. The California Department of Fish and Game predicts that 8,000 new jobs would also be created.

## California Sea Otter

At one time, more than 15,000 sea otters lived along the California Coast. These numbers declined rapidly in the early part of last century as the otter was relentlessly pursued for its fur. In 1911, otters won protection under the International Fur Seal Treaty, but recovery has been slow. In 1977, the California sea otter was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared a recovery plan for the species, which is also protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Over the last several years an average of 2,500 sea otters have been counted throughout California.

Sea otters play an important role in maintaining the health of the kelp ecosystem. Otters eat some of shellfish that feed on kelp, thus promoting the development of healthy kelp forests. Kelp forests help keep the ocean clean and harbor a diverse number of other marine wildlife including fish, seals and sea lions.

## Economic Benefits of Protecting Wildlife and Habitat

Ecotourism represents a huge economic force in the 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 addition \$150 million in tax revenues. Indeed, national wildlife refuges received nearly twice as many visitors in 2004 than Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Acadia, Grand Teton, and Statue of Liberty national parks combined.



California sea otter

And the vast majority of those visitors came from outside the area, further testament to the ability of these special places to draw people and dollars to a region.

In California alone, Lower Klamath Wildlife Refuge, bordering Oregon in the northeastern part of the state, generated \$3.2 million in economic activity for the local area. Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge generated \$2.4 million. Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge in the southwestern part of the state generated an additional \$2.2 million, and Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge on the central coast generated \$1.1 million. Last year, Defenders of Wildlife also issued a report showing that expanded sea otter conservation has the potential to bring millions of dollars into the California economy in the form of increased tourism and recreation-related revenue and jobs.

For more information on how you can help protect endangered plants and animals in California, please call Phaedra Booth, (916) 313-5800, ext. 111. For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org).



**Defenders of Wildlife**

1130 17th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036-4604

tel 202-682-9400 | fax 202-682-1331

[www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)

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