



In Colorado, 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 peregrine falcon are thriving, and species such as the Canada lynx and the black-footed ferret, once thought extinct, are appearing again in our forests and prairies 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 Colorado benefit from the act.

Colorado currently has 32 endangered and threatened species (19 animals and 13 plants).

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Peregrine Falcon

Peregrines prefer to nest on high cliffs and river gorges such as those found in the Rocky Mountains. Although never abundant, their numbers in Colorado became critically low in 1972. That year, with no breeding pairs in the state, the peregrine falcon was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The major cause of the decline was the pesticide DDT, which caused peregrines to lay thin-shelled eggs that broke during incubations. Other factors included the loss of important nesting and feeding areas due to human encroachment.

The banning of DDT in 1972 and intensive reintroduction efforts succeeded in raising peregrine numbers. In 1997, at least 81 pairs were counted in the state. The bird's recovery has been successful—not only in Colorado, but nationwide. On August 25, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the



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Black-footed ferret

peregrine falcon from the endangered and threatened species list. Now, due to the combined efforts of many state and federal agencies and nonprofit groups, Coloradans have the opportunity to see peregrine falcons again. With the devastating effects of DDT significantly reduced, peregrine falcons are able to raise enough young to ensure their continued recovery in Colorado.

Black-Footed Ferret

The black-footed ferret is one of the rarest mammals in North America. It was believed to be extinct in the United States until a small population was discovered on a Wyoming ranch in 1981. In 1986, these animals suffered an outbreak of canine distemper, and wildlife officials captured the last 18 to start a captive-breeding program. Even though loss of habitat, conversion of grasslands to agricultural uses, widespread prairie dog eradication programs and plague had reduced ferret habitat to less than 2 percent of what once existed, biologists hoped to eventually release captive-bred ferrets and re-establish a wild population.

In 1998, 20 ferrets were released on Bureau of Land Management land in Moffat County, Colorado. Management plans to guide reintroduction were developed by local working groups that included representatives from state and federal agencies, local governments, oil, gas, and mining industries, outdoor recreationists and ranchers. Based on a weeklong count in late August 2005, biologists are now confident that ferrets are breeding in the wild in

northwest Colorado. Wild-born ferrets spotted in the 20,000-acre Wolf Creek Management Area about 20 miles northeast of Rangeley, further testify to the animal's slow, but encouraging, recovery.

Nationwide, biologists hope to establish a wild pre-breeding population of 1,500 adults in 10 or more locations, with no fewer than 30 breeding adults in each, by 2010. If these objectives are met, the black-footed ferret's status could improve from endangered to threatened in the near future, a miraculous accomplishment for an animal once thought extinct.

Greenback Cutthroat Trout

The greenback cutthroat trout is native to the mountain and foothill waters of the South Platte and Arkansas River basins in Colorado. When European settlers arrived in the late 19th century, these fish were abundant in the swift-flowing mountain streams of these river systems, but greenback populations plummeted due to diversion of water for agriculture, water pollution caused by mining and logging, over-harvesting, livestock grazing and the introduction of non-native fish. They were thought to be extinct by the late 1930s, but in the 1960s, a scientist found a population of greenbacks in a creek west of Boulder, and other isolated populations were subsequently discovered.

The U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rocky Mountain National Park are cooperating on a number of recovery projects. Greenbacks have been successfully reintroduced to 58 lakes and streams in Colorado and Arkansas. Twenty-three of these populations are stable. These populations are found mostly in high-eleva-



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Greenback cutthroat trout

tion habitats where waterfalls and other natural barriers keep competitive non-native fishes out. Today, greenbacks are slowly making their way toward their recovery goals. To expedite the process, the management agencies are looking for private landowners willing to help to expand the range of these fish.

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. 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.

For more information on protecting endangered plants and animals in Colorado and how you can get involved, please call Sara Deon at (303) 825-0918. For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit 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

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