



## In the Midwest, 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, the Florida manatee and the California condor are all thriving.

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 preserve wildlife without making huge lifestyle compromises. But the biggest success is that all parties—both humans and our most vulnerable creatures—have benefited from the act. With the creation of jobs from tourism and outdoor recreation, as well as more livable communities, people all over the Midwest and throughout our country have benefited from the act.

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### Gray Wolf

The gray wolf found in the Great Lakes region, commonly called the eastern timber wolf, once ranged across an unbroken stretch from Minnesota to the Atlantic Ocean and from southern Canada to the Ohio River and perhaps farther south. Populations substantially decreased after years of human persecution, active predator control programs and prey and habitat loss. By the 1960s wolves were limited to northeastern Minnesota, where they numbered 300 to 1,000 animals. Today, with the help of the Endangered Species Act, the Great Lakes population of the gray wolf numbers in the thousands, making gray wolf recovery in the region a national success story.

A key part of that success has been efforts to reduce the impact of wolves on ranchers and livestock. To that end, Defenders of Wildlife supports research projects that test ways to deter wolves from attacking livestock, including the use of guard dogs and fladry, which consists of flags placed around the perimeter of livestock pastures. These efforts, supported by The Bailey Wildlife Foundation Proactive Carnivore Conservation Fund, aim to reduce conflicts with wolves to foster increased human tolerance for wolf populations that have recolonized within this region.

Today, wolves thrive not only in northeastern



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Indiana bat

Minnesota, but have also crossed into northern Wisconsin and from there into Michigan's Upper Peninsula, making the Great Lakes region one of the nation's greatest wolf recovery sites.

## Whooping Crane

Throughout the early 20th century, whooping crane numbers declined precipitously as they were hunted for their feathers and meat, and their habitat was transformed into agricultural land. The whooping crane was designated as an endangered species in 1967 under a precursor of the Endangered Species Act, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began an extensive captive breeding program to save the bird from extinction. In cooperation with several conservation groups, captive-bred cranes continue to be released into the wild in an effort to create additional, separate populations. As a result, whooping crane numbers have been slowly increasing since reaching a low of 15 individuals in the 1930s.

One of the most well publicized recovery efforts is Operation Migration, a partnership between federal and local governments and conservationists to teach captive bred whooping cranes to migrate south using ultra-light aircraft. Since 2001, ultra-light planes have been leading

whooping cranes from their summer home in Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin to their winter home in Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Starting with a group of eight birds in 2001, the 2005 migration flock contained 20 birds. It is expected that teaching more birds to migrate and creating separate, additional populations will continue this bird's remarkable march back from the edge of extinction.

## Indiana Bat

The Indiana bat was the first bat species placed on the endangered species list in 1973, after its population declined due to habitat loss and human disturbance throughout the Midwest. Changes in the bat's winter habitat of caves and abandoned mines seem to be the primary cause of the animal's decline. During the winter, Indiana bats enter a state of hibernation. Human disturbance during this period causes the bats to deplete energy reserves needed to survive until the spring. Successful efforts by federal and state governments, along with conservation groups to secure winter habitat throughout their range have resulted in stable, and even increasing, populations in some areas.

One of the key recovery efforts for the Indiana bat is the Great Lakes Bats and Mines Initiative started in 1999. Bat Conservation International joined forces with the National Resource Conservation Service, Michigan and Minnesota departments of natural resources, U.S.D.A. Forest Service and private landowners and contractors to evaluate abandoned mines and to stabilize entrances and limit human access to those supporting bat populations by installing gates. Over three years, 14 gates were constructed at 10 different mine sites protecting an estimated 400,000 bats. In addition, reopened and protected mines offer additional miles of mine passage, allowing bat populations to expand. Partnerships like this are the very heart of the Endangered Species Act and are the most effective means of conserving plants and animals.

## What You Can Do

The Endangered Species Act works because of individuals like you who help make it a success. To assist Defenders of Wildlife in protecting the act and make it work better for all concerned, we urge you to:

- ✓ Communicate with your elected officials about the importance of the act.
- ✓ Work with your local media to educate the public about the act's accomplishments.
- ✓ Reach out to others in your community and urge them to get involved.

To learn more about the Endangered Species Act and ways you can help protect America's vulnerable species, please visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org).



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