



## In Minnesota, 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 native to Minnesota such as the gray wolf and the winged mapleleaf mussel are recovering 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 Minnesota benefit from the act.

Minnesota currently has 17 endangered and threatened species (13 animals and 4 plants).

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### Gray Wolf

While gray wolves once ranged throughout most of the northern United States, ranchers and government agencies began a campaign to eliminate the wolf in the 19th Century. In Minnesota, the Department of Conservation administered a wolf-control program, which included aerial killing, until 1956. As late as 1965, wolves were trapped and hunted with snowmobiles and dogs and the state paid a bounty on them. From 1969 until 1974, wolves were killed under a livestock-depredation control program. However, since 1974, wolves in the entire lower 48 have been fully protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Today, over 3,000 wolves exist in Minnesota. All population recovery goals for Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan have been met, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering removing wolves in the Great Lakes region from the endangered species list.



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Peregrine falcon

However, some obstacles remain. For instance, in anticipation of the animals' delisting, the Minnesota legislature has passed a law that broadens the legal limits under which wolves can be shot. Nevertheless, the return of the gray wolf to the Great Lakes region is one of this nation's most impressive conservation success stories.

### Canada Lynx

Once found in 16 states, lynx numbers have rapidly declined mostly due to over-development, habitat destruction, and trapping. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Canada lynx as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act in 2000. And while lynx were nearly eliminated from Minnesota in the 1980s, radio-telemetry findings and recent sightings, videos and photographs of females with kittens indicate that a population, albeit small, does currently exist.

To ensure the future of that population, and in response to the "threatened" listing, Superior National Forest began a Canada lynx backtracking study in January 2002. Researchers followed lynx tracks found on a road into the woods and collected scat and hair for DNA testing. This technique confirmed lynx presence in the forest and the need for more intensive lynx studies. In winter 2003, Superior National Forest, the Natural Resources Research Institute and the University of Minnesota-Duluth, with some financial support from Defenders, established a study

of lynx habitat. Biologists fitted two male lynx with radio collars with hopes of collaring additional lynx over the next several years. Since then, agencies have recorded multiple sightings of lynx in these areas and other areas in northern Minnesota—including sightings and videos of lynx with kittens—and collared additional lynx. It is hoped that these combined efforts will paint a bright future for this beautiful, elusive cat in Minnesota.

### Winged Mapleleaf Mussel

The winged mapleleaf mussel once inhabited at least 34 river systems in 12 midwestern states. At present, the only known reproducing population exists along a 10-kilometer stretch of the St. Croix River in Minnesota. This small isolated population is at risk from several factors, most notably a potential zebra mussel infestation and the effects of variable water releases from a hydropower dam just upstream. The winged mapleleaf was first listed on June 20, 1991 and is currently designated as endangered in the entire United States, except where it is part of a designated "experimental population."

To assist in the recovery of the winged mapleleaf, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have proposed building a new mussel propagation facility adjacent to the St. Croix River. This facility would develop and implement technology for raising and reintroducing mussels, specifi-

cally the winged mapleleaf, and enhance public awareness and support for mussel conservation.

### 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 additional \$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. 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 Minnesota alone, the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge in the east central part of the state generated \$1.2 million in economic activity for the local area, while the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in the northern part of the state generated \$413,000, and the northwestern Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge generated an additional \$329,800.

For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org).



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