



In North Dakota, 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 rare species such as the whooping crane and Western prairie fringed orchid are recovering in our prairie lands and forests 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 North Dakota benefit from the act.

North Dakota currently has nine endangered and threatened species (eight animals and one plant).

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Whooping Crane

At a height of five feet, the whooping crane is the tallest bird in North America. Equally impressive is its seven-foot wingspan. Sadly, the whooping crane disappeared from the heart of its breeding range in the north-central United States by the 1890s. Reasons for the initial decline included habitat loss from draining and clearing wetlands, and human disturbance in breeding areas and along migration routes. The birds were also shot for their feathers and meat.

The wetlands in the Great Plains, known as prairie potholes, are vital to these migratory birds. Many areas containing such potholes, including Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota, were set aside in the 1930s to help birds recover from the Dust Bowl. Thanks to a captive-breeding program begun in 1967, whooping crane numbers have increased. The birds have been reintroduced to the wild, leading to the establishment of new flocks in other parts of the country where the birds were historically found.

A nonmigratory population was established in Florida and a migratory flock, which was started with



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Whooping cranes

young birds reintroduced in Wisconsin and taught a migratory route to Florida through the use of an ultra-light aircraft, now migrates each fall and spring through the midwestern and eastern United States. From a low of 21 birds in the 1940s, the current whooper population, including wild and captive birds, is 475 as of September 2005, a true Endangered Species Act success story.

Western Prairie Fringed Orchid

The western prairie fringed orchid is a perennial flower which grows up to three feet high and is distinguished by large, white flowers that come from a single stem. This orchid, once found throughout the tall-grass regions of North America, was listed as threatened in the United States in 1989. Today it remains at only 172 sites in six states and one in Manitoba. North Dakota's Sheyenne National Grasslands is home to the largest population of the orchid left in the world, over 2,000 individual plants.

The major cause of the orchid's decline has been conversion of prairie habitat to cropland. However, changes in the underground water table may also adversely affect the orchid. Other land management practices such as burning, grazing and mowing may also have an impact on the species depending on their timing, frequency, and intensity. Herbicides and leafy spurge, an invasive, non-native weed that can completely overtake large areas of open land, also influence orchid numbers.

TEAM Leafy Spurge, a U.S.

Department of Agriculture research and demonstration program that ran from 1998 to 2004, helped increase public awareness of the serious threat leafy spurge presents to croplands, waterways and native species such as the fringed orchid. The program brought together state and federal agencies, land grant universities, weed managers, extension agents, private landowners and ranchers. to address ways to "purge the spurge." TEAM participants continue to collaborate on strategies to effectively and affordably control leafy spurge and to help restore land vital to the continued recovery of the western prairie fringed orchid.

Western prairie fringed orchid



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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 North Dakota alone, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge in the west-central part of the state generated \$593,000 in economic activity for the local area, while Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge, on the border with Montana, generated \$248,100 and Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge in east-central North Dakota generated an additional \$87,600.

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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