



ABOUT EARTHJUSTICE

Founded in 1971, Earthjustice fights for the right of all to a healthy environment. As the nation's premier nonprofit environmental law organization, we take on the biggest, most precedent-setting cases across the country. We wield the power of the law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, preserve magnificent places and wildlife, advance clean energy, and combat climate change.



THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Our Nation's Best Defense against the Global Extinction Crisis

Leading scientists report that we face a mass extinction crisis, with extinction rates for earth's species now at the highest point since the dinosaurs were wiped off the face of the earth 65 million years. It is widely agreed that this mass die-off is largely the result of human activity – including significant ecological impacts from climate change. These threats to our planet's biodiversity endanger not only ecosystems but also our own survival as a species, as healthy ecosystems provide services that sustain societies while also adding billions of dollars to the U.S. economy each year. By preserving endangered species, we help to preserve ourselves.

EXTINCTION & THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

EXTINCTION BY THE NUMBERS

The world has lost half of its wildlife species in the last 40 years. According to the World Wildlife Fund's [2014 Living Planet Report](#), mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish have declined by 52 percent, and freshwater species have decreased by an alarming 76 percent. Two recent studies found that species are disappearing at a rate of [114](#) to [1,000](#) times faster than normal.

- ✔ Almost one third of all known species of plants and animals—22,784 species—are currently at risk of extinction, as reported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's "[Red List.](#)"
- ✔ New [research](#) indicates that anywhere from 10 to 690 extinctions occur worldwide each week.
- ✔ Invertebrates—which include insects, snails, and other species without a backbone—constitute up to 99% of the world's species but have been largely overlooked, potentially downplaying the extinction crisis. A 2012 [report](#) found that one-fifth of the world's invertebrates are heading towards extinction and a more recent [study](#) found that 40 percent of Hawaiian land snail species are already extinct.
- ✔ Climate change alone could drive as many as 1 in 6 animals and plant species to extinction, according to a [report](#) in Science—that's on top of other threats including habitat degradation and loss from human development.

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Despite the grim reports on extinction rates, there is hope here in the United States thanks to the Endangered Species Act. Passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support in 1973, this landmark law has protected America's biodiversity for more than 40 years. The Endangered Species Act provides commonsense, balanced solutions for conservation and development, allowing people to prosper while also protecting species and vital habitats. The act has been remarkably successful, preventing more than 99% of listed species from going extinct, including such iconic species as the bald eagle, gray whale and American alligator. The Endangered Species Act is also an incredibly popular law—supported by 90% of American voters.

Now more than ever we need a strong, fully funded, and enforced Endangered Species Act – our nation's best defense against the global extinction crisis.

For more information:

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