

The ESA's Impact on Gray Wolves

BANG. Is that a hunter's rifle? CRACK. Another fallen tree? CLANG. Another snare?

While familiar sounds to a wolf in the 20th century, gray wolves today no longer have to deal with large human threats like these because of how significant a role the Environmental Species Act (ESA) played in the preservation and restoration of the gray wolf. For decades, gray wolf populations have been on the decline because of the excessive harm caused to them by humans, but The Endangered Species Act helped counteract this severe decline, and because of these efforts, gray wolf populations began to rise once more.

As stated earlier, gray wolf populations were on the decline for several reasons. Editor in Chief of Environment.co, Jane Marsh, revealed that “excessive hunting, trapping and habitat loss” caused the near extinction of gray wolves (Marsh). The animals were hunted because they would get too close to farms and their livestock. Farmers, fearing for their safety, would shoot and trap wolves just for getting a little too close. Without the adequate adaptations to survive being hunted to the brink, gray wolf numbers dwindled. When the ESA was put into place, however, these “commonplace” practices were significantly reduced.

The Endangered Species Act managed to counteract the slippery slope of declining wolf populations. History.com informs us that the ESA “mandated the federal government to keep a list of all species in need of protection,” as well as make sure those species and their habitats aren't harmed (Endangered Species Act signed into law). This original list was what protected the gray wolves in the first place, and the mandates against harming any protected species, stopping the gray wolves from being hunted and their habitats from being destroyed.

Furthermore, this act goes beyond the safety of wolf populations. Ms. Marsh, who wrote the article *Why the Gray Wolf Needs Endangered Species Act Protection*, also tells us that protecting gray wolves will help control and maintain ecosystems by “controlling other animal’s populations” (Marsh). Gray wolves will keep their prey’s population down, in turn allowing them to thrive in a more healthy environment. This then cycles back to the wolves, creating and maintaining a flourishing ecosystem that the Endangered Species Act put in place.

In correspondence to my previous point, the Endangered Species Act didn’t only counteract their decline but also managed to raise gray wolf populations. The codes put into place by the ESA prevented hunting and poaching, which allowed populations to grow naturally instead of constantly being hunted. For example, according to Serge Lariviere, “greater tolerance, legal protection, and other factors,” helped these animals make a comeback in parts of the United States (Larivieve). One of these legal protections was the ESA. This shows that it supported and mandated the growth of endangered animal populations like the gray wolves.

The Endangered Species Act played an important role in helping not only gray wolves but also many other endangered animals grow and preserve their populations. Gray wolves’ populations were declining before this monumental act, which helped to preserve the population. Because of the ESA, gray wolf populations began to rise once more. So, while wolves were one of the original species on the Endangered Species Act list, their progress and recovery takes time. Restoration efforts for these wolves have been underway for decades now and are still far from over. Legislation like the ESA can give us hope for future species though, I mean, just look at the gray wolves!

Work Cited

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