

Your Endangered Species Bucket List: Where to Find the “Must See” Species

Many people have a list of rare, threatened and endangered species that they would like to see up-close, but aren't sure where to go.

Once you have your “bucket list” of plant and animal species, here are some suggestions where you might get a close-up look. Of course, you want to be careful not to disturb them or their habitats.

***Zoos and Aquariums**—Check with your local zoo or aquarium and visit their web sites to see species that might be on exhibit. Some zoos and animal parks have “behind the scenes” photo safaris. Visit www.aza.org to find a list of U.S. zoos and aquariums.

***Wildlife Refuges**—There may be a nearby National Wildlife Refuge that includes self-guided or formal tours. Travel to www.refugeassociation.org for a directory of refuges.

***National Parks**—Some of our national parks have local or visiting species that are rare or threatened. Consider taking your vacation to one or more parks, which may offer guided tours. Go to www.nps.gov for a map of our parks.

***Botanical Center**—You can view rare and endangered plants at a botanic garden or other public garden. See www.publicgardens.org for more information.

***Audubon Hikes**—Audubon chapters often have bird hikes and other field trips to see unique species. You can find contact information about special Audubon Nature Centers and your local chapter at: www.audubon.org

***Other Environmental Groups**—In addition to Audubon chapters, you can obtain recommendations from Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation and other groups.

***Ocean Excursions**—You may have an opportunity to take a trip along the coast or inland waterway to see whales, manatees or other marine species. Make sure that they are appropriately certified and have an excellent record for animal safety.

***Wildlife Tours**—Of course, there are a variety of tours available for those able to travel to other countries. Do your research to find the operators that appear to be the most environmentally-sensitive.

If you're unable to find a nearby location and can't travel to another site to view a particular species, you may want to modify your list to include species that are viewable.

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