

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

PROTECTING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE



The Endangered Species Act is one of the strongest provisions for protecting native plant, insect, and animal species at risk of extinction and serves as a safety net for plants, birds, fish, and wildlife. By instituting protections for these species and the critical habitats in which they live, the Endangered Species Act has allowed for the recovery of such iconic species as the bald eagle, American alligator, whooping crane, and the humpback whale. There are approximately 2,215 plant and animal species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.



HOW IT WORKS



The Endangered Species Act, overseen by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, allows wildlife in danger of extinction to be listed as threatened or endangered and to receive protections to prevent the loss of these species. An endangered species is one that is considered to be in danger of extinction in all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened species is likely to be endangered within the foreseeable future. Under the Endangered Species Act, it is unlawful for anyone to harm, endanger, or “take” a member of a listed species. This includes acts that may indirectly harm the species by damaging critical habitat or impacting other species that are vital to the listed species’ survival. The Endangered Species Act also creates plans for the recovery of these species and provides resources to aid the conservation efforts of landowners, tribes, and state agencies. Thanks to the Endangered Species Act, we have the opportunity to preserve America’s natural heritage for future generations.



POLLING

The Endangered Species Act is one of the most cherished conservation laws; in a recent poll nine out of ten (90%) of American voters support the Endangered Species Act [1].

87% of Americans agree that the Endangered Species Act serves as a successful safety net for protecting wildlife, plants and fish from the risk of extinction [2].

90% of voters believe that they have a responsibility to be good stewards of the environment and to avoid causing species to go extinct [3].

70% of respondents believe that wolves are a vital part of America’s wilderness and natural heritage [4].

SUCCESS STORIES



The black-footed ferret was once thought to be extinct, largely due to the loss of prairie dog colonies, as prairie dogs comprise the majority of their diet. In 1981, a small population was discovered in Wyoming [5]. This population was then taken into captivity in 1987, and its members are the founders of all subsequent reintroductions. As of 2008, the ferrets have been reintroduced into eighteen sites, and the Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that the total population consisted of 1,410 ferrets in early 2010 [6,7].



The humpback whale population was greatly threatened by commercial whaling before the early 1900s. In 1966, the North Pacific humpback population was estimated to be around only 1,200 individuals [8]. Endangered Species Act protections allowed for a dramatic increase to a 2010 population estimate of 21,808 [9]. The population will continue to recover through efforts to protect and restore this species.



Before its listing under the Endangered Species Act, the bald eagle was missing in much of its range across the continental United States due to factors such as habitat loss and damage to egg shells because of the chemical DDT. Reintroduction into several states in the continental United States and the banning of DDT contributed to the recovery of the species, that was downlisted from endangered to threatened in 1995 and delisted in 2007, when its population had grown from 416 individuals in 1963 to a population of 11,052 [10,11]. While the eagle once was missing from thirteen of the states in its range in 1984, it was found nesting in each of the lower 48 states in 2006 [11].

Citations: [1] Tulchin Research (June 2015) *Endangered Species Act National Survey*. [2] Harris Poll National Quorum® (2011). *Endangered Species Act Poll*. [3] Decision Research (2004). *Endangered Species Act Poll*. [4] Public Policy Polling (2013). *National Wolf Survey*. [5] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. Black-footed Ferret Recovery plan. (Denver, Co). ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plans/1988/880808.pdf; [6] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Black-footed ferret 5-Year review, summary and evaluation. "Pierre, S.D." ecos.fws.gov/docs/five_year_review/doc2364.pdf; [7] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. Black-Footed ferret. www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/blackfootedferret. [8] NOAA Fisheries. 2005. Stock Assessment Report. Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*): Eastern North Pacific Stock, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington, D.C.; [9] NOAA Fisheries. 2010. Draft Stock Assessment Report Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*): Central North Pacific Stock, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington, D.C.[10] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2007. Bald Eagle Numbers Soaring. May 14, 2007 press release. [11] Suckling, K. and W. Hodges. Status of the bald eagle in the lower 48 states and the District of Columbia: 1963-2007. Center for Biological Diversity, Tucson, AZ. www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/birds/bald_eagle/report/index.html.

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT TODAY

Despite its success and vital importance for protecting America's wildlife, the Endangered Species Act has faced many attacks throughout its history, and wildlife opponents continue to propose bills that undermine the Act. Some bills have attempted to prevent fragile species from receiving the protection they deserve, allow industry groups to degrade fragile habitats, undermine the science behind wildlife protections, and remove citizens' rights to implement this important law. It is vital that we remind our lawmakers to uphold their duty to our nation's plants and animals by supporting the mission of the Endangered Species Act.

ENDANGERED SPECIES COALITION

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