



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW TIME (08:24)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP ENDANGERED SPECIES
(HOST – SARAH LEON WITH LEDA HUTA)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: Hello there, this is Sarah Leon for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I am on the phone today with Leda Huta, Executive Director of the Endangered Species Coalition. Hi Leda, how are you today?

MS. HUTA: Hi Sarah, I am doing well thanks. How are you?

MS. LEON: I am doing fine thanks. All right now Leda what many people might not recognize is that recovering endangered and threatened species is really a shared responsibility and we aligned a diverse group of partners to help further species conservation. So for all of those individuals out there who are maybe skeptical but they personally can make a difference for these species, what can you tell them?

MS. HUTA: Individuals definitely make a difference. I think one of our favorite stories about that is there is a ranching family in California with two children. I think they were elementary ages at the time and they were on the property one day and spotted these frogs that they thought, you know they looked pretty special, they looked like different kinds of frogs. After doing some research and contacting, some scientific experts realized that it was an endangered species. It was the red-legged California frog and they were very excited to find that species and did a lot of work on their property that was good for the cattle, but was also good for the frogs.

It was the first time in many, many years that the frogs have been seen in that part of California in that county. So, not all of us are going to be that lucky to get an

endangered species like that right on our property. But, there are still things that we can definitely be doing at home.

One of the most important things for protecting endangered species is really protecting their habitat. So invasive species have been a pretty big threat for endangered species and so it is really important for us not to plant invasive species. There are still invasive species being sold in some garden centers. So, to really do our research and start-planting natives that support the natural eco system of our area and support the pollinators that we need to keep those eco systems going.

That is one of the kinds of steps that we can take. I think also be aware when planting plants, we want to make sure that they are themselves not an endangered species. There are certainly very coveted plants like orchids that have a strong market for them. We always want to make sure that we are dealing with really reputable seller of plants so that we are not buying anything that might be endangered.

One of the other things that is really important is that we have to conserve our water. Water is predicted to be one of the worst impacts that humans are going to see in the time of climate change particularly throughout the Western U.S. But, we are also seeing it even on the East. As water becomes a scarce commodity, people will be struggling over that issue and there is really no reason for us to be using quite as much water as we do. I think whenever we look at how much water Americans use verses the rest of the world, it is a good reminder for us that it is really going to impact our quality of life if we are really to conserve water more than we do and at this point we tend to be pretty wasteful with it.

And, protecting water not just, in terms of how much we use, but also being really mindful of not using really toxic pesticides and herbicides. Those kinds of chemicals make their way into the water stream.

Where I live in Silver Spring, Maryland, which is really close to Washington D.C. and it is part of the Chesapeake Bay water shed, large water shed in terms of its geographic region and so everything that we do in our home within the water shed will eventually make its way into the Chesapeake Bay. So, really being careful about the toxics that we purchase and trying to eliminate that as much as possible. Not buying pesticides, not buying herbicides, and spraying that around our property.

And those that live in more rural areas is one of the things that is sort of a common sense to do is really be careful about your use of garbage and not having it out. Making sure it is really contained so that it is not attracting wildlife to your property that really should be in the wild.

And, slowing down, especially in rural areas when we are driving. There is a lot of wildlife that are killed crossing the roads. It is a particular concern in Florida with the Florida panther. One of our most endangered mammals in the United States. A lot of them unfortunately have been killed on the road. So, slowing down when you are

driving and slowing down in boats as well. So, there is a whole list of things that people can do at home that really make a big difference for endangered species.

MS. LEON: Are there any actions individuals can take then within their community?

MS. HUTA: Yes, the community is another place that you can really work locally to make an impact globally. As I said, the habitat of a species is the most important thing to protect in order to keep the species thriving. So, volunteering at your local nature center or your local wildlife refuge. We all know that our country is faced with many budget crunches and these kinds of centers could really use the support. So, researching what nature centers are around, what wildlife refuges are around, and the kind of volunteer opportunities that they have.

In some places, you may even learn about species that are not quite endangered or threatened but that local communities, states, or counties are concerned about that numbers might be going down and there may be opportunities to even sort of adopt a species, especially for classrooms or others. There might be programs for instance; raising turtles from babies until a certain age and then releasing them back into the wild when they are less likely to be predated upon.

With a little bit of research you can find those kinds of really interesting and fun opportunities and one that is very fun is endangered species day, which this year is happening on May 20th, but it happens every year. The third Friday of May, so putting on an endangered species day celebration is an opportunity to really educate your community about endangered species. How to deal with endangered species in your local area or your state and the need to protect them and how important that is.

One of the things that is unique about America is our endangered species program. We are one of the best, if not the best countries in the world in terms of the efforts that we take to protect endangered species. This is a day to really celebrate the fact that America does a great job actually protecting endangered species compared to much of the world. I don't think that most Americans realize that we have this outstanding program. That we have one of the strongest endangered species laws in the world and that we actually implement that law in a way that is remarkable and a great model for the rest of the world. So, we really feel that it is important for people to get that message out on endangered species day and to recognize how great America is at protecting endangered species. Also, to talk about the success stories that the program has had in protecting species and of course, many people know that our bald eagle had been an endangered species and it had a miraculous recovery and has been greatly protected by the kinds of laws that we have passed in the U.S.

So, endangered species day is a great day to get that message out and to talk about those kinds of great success that we have had. And, there are many different ways that you can celebrate endangered species day. We have many ideas on our website, endangeredspeciesday.org.

MS. LEON: Oh, that is great. So then endangered species day reminds us that we can all make a difference for these species by what we do and the choices we make.

MS. HUTA: That is exactly right and you know it is a fun way to celebrate the day and the program that we have protecting endangered species and letting others know about it.

MS. LEON: Well, thank you so much Leda for taking the time today to speak with us. It was a real pleasure having you on.

MS. HUTA: Thank you so much.

MS. LEON: For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this is Sarah Leon.