

News Release



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Fish and Wildlife Service Celebrates Endangered Species Day

On May 15, 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will honor Endangered Species Day and the numerous nationwide conservation programs underway aimed at protecting America's threatened and endangered species.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA), one of the most important environmental laws in history, is credited with saving 99.9 percent of species protected by the ESA from extinction. Co-administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the purpose of the ESA is to conserve imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

When Congress passed the ESA in 1973, it formally established that our rich natural heritage is of "esthetic, ecological, educational, recreational, and scientific value to our Nation and its people." It also expressed concern that many of our nation's native fish, wildlife, and plants were in danger of becoming extinct.

"The Endangered Species Act is the nation's premier law protecting biodiversity today," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director Rowan Gould. "Without this law, we would probably not see bald eagles soaring in our skies or grizzlies in Yellowstone. Endangered Species Day provides an opportunity to celebrate our shared successes and look forward to a strengthened partnership with the American public to conserve our natural treasures of fish, wildlife, and plants."

The Service works with other federal agencies, State and tribal governments, environmental organizations, industry groups, species experts, academia, the scientific community, and other members of the public to conserve our Nation's threatened and endangered fish, wildlife, and plants.

"Now, more than ever before, we need the contributions of our partners to achieve recovery and conservation of America's imperiled species," said Endangered Species Assistant Director Bryan Arroyo. "Leveraging the resources, experience and expertise of a wide range of partners is vital to our combined success."

In the Pacific Region, the overwhelming majority of threatened and endangered species are found on the small islands of Hawai‘i; the plight of these birds was highlighted in the State of the Birds Report released in March. In response to the crisis faced by Hawai‘i’s endemic birds, the Service is working with its partners, including the American Bird Conservancy, Hawai‘i Division of Forestry and Wildlife, and USGS Biological Resources Discipline, to develop and implement the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Hawaiian Forest Birds Keystone Initiative, a focused, multi-year plan that will invest in the conservation of three of Hawai‘i’s most endangered birds – the palila, Nihoa millerbird, and Maui parrotbill. This initiative strategically addresses the most critical impediments to these three species and, in conjunction with existing conservation efforts, is anticipated to significantly expedite the recovery process. Although the keystone initiative will focus on improving the status of these three species, the actions involved will benefit many other species and their habitats. In this early stage of planning, the initiative partners are in the process of building agreements for the first year of funding and planning for subsequent years.

The bald eagle, grizzly bear, American alligator and gray wolf are all species which once found themselves on the list, facing the brink of extinction but have successfully rebounded. The wood stork, Kirtland’s warbler, Louisiana black bear and Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle are listed species that are showing good progress towards achieving recovery – the ultimate goal of the ESA. These recovered and recovering species are just a few examples of those benefiting from the protections afforded by the ESA and the dedicated people who work to ensure their continued existence.

There are currently 1317 species listed in the U.S.: 746 plants and 571 animals. To find out what endangered species are near you, and how you can help, please visit www.fws.gov/endangered.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **www.fws.gov**.

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