

News Release

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U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE CELEBRATES ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY

VERO BEACH, Fla. – 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) is one of the most important environmental laws in history. 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 -- many of which are in south Florida.

There are nearly 70 species of imperiled animals and plants in south Florida listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA. Among them: the Florida panther, Key deer, Everglade snail kite, green sea turtle and wood stork.

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.

"We're working with our partners throughout south Florida to advance imperiled species recovery and also fish and wildlife conservation more broadly," said Paul Souza, Field Supervisor of the South Florida Ecological Services Office. "South Florida is such a biologically rich and diverse place. We have one of

the world's most important ecosystems right in our backyard...the Everglades. The challenges are daunting, but there have been some success stories."

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. To see a video about Endangered Species Day, go to <http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2009/es/ESPSA.html>.

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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