

ENDANGERED EARTH



CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
FALL 2019

BELUGA WHALES

We sued the Trump administration for authorizing an oil company to harm endangered beluga whales through its offshore-drilling operations in Cook Inlet, Alaska. The inlet's tiny population of belugas is facing serious threats from Hilcorp's seismic blasting and other dangerous oil and gas activities.

ENDANGERED ART

Artists Roger Peet and Tricia Tripp completed the Center's 22nd endangered species mural, a 105-foot-long painting in Seward, Alaska, that depicts rare seabirds called spectacled eiders, as well as endangered North Pacific right whales.

WEST COAST ORCAS

Following a Center lawsuit against the Trump administration for failing to provide habitat protection orcas need to survive, the feds proposed in September to expand critical habitat protection for endangered "Southern Resident" orcas to more than 15,000 square miles off the West Coast.

HUMBOLDT MARTENS

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted this fall to ban the trapping of Humboldt martens, a species the Center has petitioned to protect under the Endangered Species Act. There are fewer than 200 left in Oregon.

CALIFORNIA FUR-TRAPPING BAN

In a major milestone, California has become the nation's first state to outlaw fur trapping. The Wildlife Protection Act of 2019, pursued and backed by the Center, was signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in September. It prohibits trapping native animals plus selling their pelts.

ROSEMONT MINE BLOCKED

In a lawsuit by the Center and allies, a federal judge blocked construction of the disastrous Rosemont copper mine in Arizona's Santa Rita Mountains. The decision tosses out the Trump administration's 2017 mine approval. It's a major win for borderlands jaguars and other wildlife.

MICRONESIAN SPECIES

The Center took legal action in August against the Trump administration to force it to protect critical habitat for 23 endangered species in the Pacific Islands. These 14 plants and nine animals are threatened by sprawl, military expansion, climate change and more.

EMPEROR PENGUINS

We sued the Trump administration in July for failing to act on our petition to protect emperor penguins under the Endangered Species Act.

WIN FOR WILDLIFE AND WATERWAYS

A landmark agreement we and our allies secured in August — stemming from our legal challenge of an interstate project around Raleigh, North Carolina — will deliver more than \$45 million in environmental benefits to the state's mussels, fish and other freshwater species.

DEFENDING THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Center and allies sued the Trump administration in August for its scorched-earth rules for the Endangered Species Act, which will have a devastating impact. They make it harder to protect critical habitat and easier to deny protection to species listed as "threatened."

CAROLINA COAL

We're working for clean air in North Carolina with a lawsuit against UNC-Chapel Hill for violations of the Clean Air Act: the university's outdated coal-burning boilers spew harmful pollution.

CLIMATE STRIKE

Center staff joined rallies in New York City, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and other cities for the international Climate Strike started by activist Greta Thunberg in support of a world that looks beyond fossil fuels to a future that is safe and healthy for everyone. Four million students and other activists joined over 2,500 events on all seven continents in a historic day of protest.

WILDLIFE-KILLING CONTESTS

The Grand Canyon State became the fourth in the nation to ban wildlife-killing contests when a governor's council approved a new rule by the Arizona Fish and Game Commission.

THE PLASTICS BOOM

Old rules allowed plants that make plastic from fracked natural gas to spew 128 million pounds of pollutants into U.S. waterways last year — and the industry's expanding. So we've filed a legal petition demanding the Environmental Protection Agency set stricter water-pollution limits on plastics plants.

This image of North and South America at night is a composite assembled from data acquired by the Suomi NPP satellite in April and October 2012, courtesy NASA.

CALIFORNIA LIONS ON THE BRINK



The past century hasn't been kind to California's top predators. Government-sponsored extermination campaigns wiped out the state's grizzly bears and gray wolves, leaving the elusive mountain lion as the last remaining large carnivore.

That's not to say people didn't *try* to eradicate the big cats. From 1907 to 1963, the lions were considered a nuisance — more than 12,000 were killed for bounties. And the sport-hunting of mountain lions was legal until 1972. Now some California cougar populations face what scientists call an "extinction vortex." Human pressures will eliminate these cats if left unchecked.

Lack of connectivity is the primary driver of the California puma's demise. Roads and development slice through and gobble up cougar habitat. Approximately 100 mountain lions are killed by cars every year as they search for dwindling territory. They're also pushed closer to human-occupied areas and confrontations with farm animals. That leads to about 100 cougars a year being killed under depredation permits, as well as poaching and rodenticide poisonings. And their isolation is causing dangerous levels of inbreeding.

Movement barriers from highways and sprawl have created 10 isolated, genetically distinct cougar

populations in California — more than any other state. At least two populations (in the Santa Ana and Santa Monica mountains) have such low genetic diversity that scientists predict they could become extinct within 15 years if inbreeding gets worse. And populations in the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and Santa Cruz mountains are showing similar signs of degradation.

That's why the Center is seeking protections for Central Coast and Southern California mountain lions under the California Endangered Species Act.

If the California Fish and Game Commission approves our petition, state agencies would be required to preserve key habitat linkages and enhance connectivity by building new wildlife crossings and upgrading culverts.

We're also fighting poorly planned sprawl that would cut off known mountain lion corridors. We're challenging in court Centennial, Northlake and Altair — three massive new developments that would further damage critical connectivity. If we protect mountain lions, we can help other vulnerable wildlife. Millions of animals, from migrating California tiger salamanders to foraging San Joaquin kit foxes, are killed on state roads every year. Even insects like the Quino checkerspot butterfly need safe passage over roadways.

We'll keep fighting to reconnect habitat for California's imperiled mountain lions and other wildlife until they can roam freely and thrive.

Tiffany Yap • Staff Scientist
Urban Wildlands Program



THE PLASTICS BOOM



Our Fight to Stop a Polluting Plastics Plant in the Heart of Cancer Alley

The Center has been battling alongside Gulf Coast communities to stop the expansion of offshore drilling for years. It's crucial but frustrating work: We watched the Obama administration offer up all available federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico to the oil industry — the biggest fossil-fuel lease sale in U.S. history. This semiannual atrocity continues under the Trump administration.

Today we're working with those same allies in the Gulf as we expand the scope of our campaign against fossil-fuel industry abuses in the region to include facilities that transform fracked gas into raw materials for single-use plastics, including bags, straws and bottles.

Despite unimaginable amounts of plastic trash accumulating in our oceans, Shell, ExxonMobil, Dow and other multinational corporations are investing hundreds of billions of dollars to build a fleet of new petrochemical plants that aim to increase U.S. plastic production by 40 percent over the next decade. This plastics boom is driven not by consumer demand, but by our country's oversupply of fracked natural gas.

Continued expansion of oil and gas drilling for fuels and plastic production not only kills Gulf wildlife and accelerates climate change, but also poisons frontline communities and drives the plastic pollution crisis. All these issues intersect in St. James Parish, a black community in the heart of Cancer Alley where

residents suffer from unreasonably high cancer rates due to exposure to toxic industrial pollutants — and where Formosa Plastics intends to build a massive plastics plant.

We're standing with the St. James community in the fight to ensure Formosa knows it's not welcome. The Center has partnered with local activists to challenge key air and water permits, protest at public hearings, and march along the Mississippi to the State Capitol, where we urged Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards to put a stop to Formosa's dirty plastics facility. The campaign is gaining momentum, and elected officials and major media outlets are taking note.

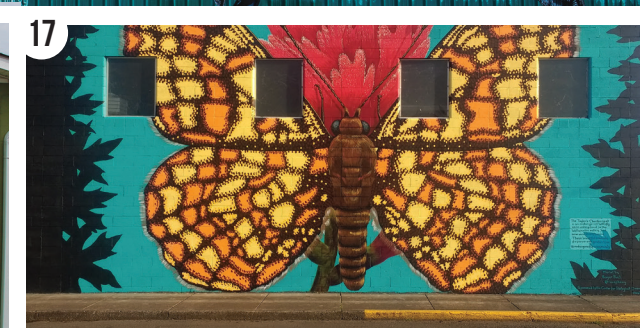
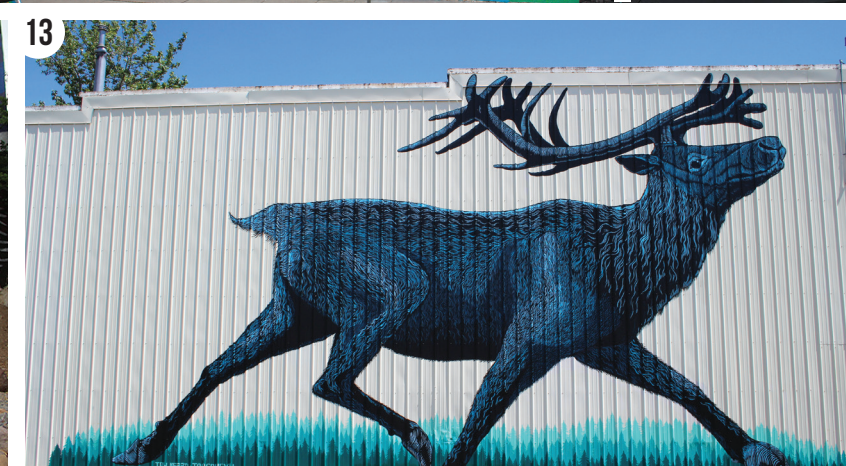
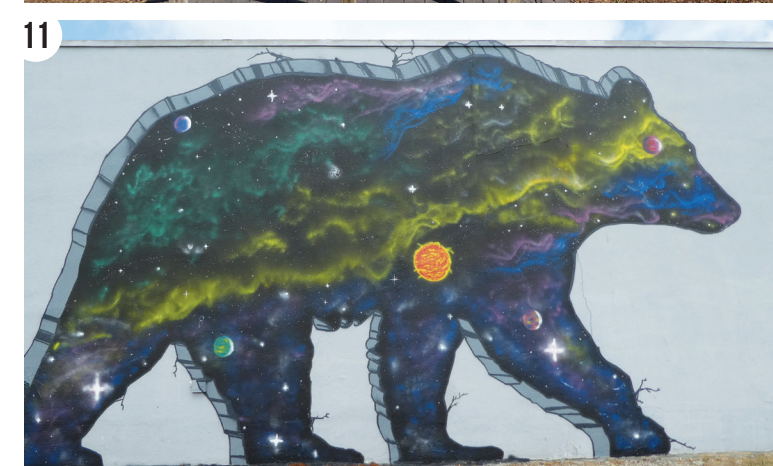
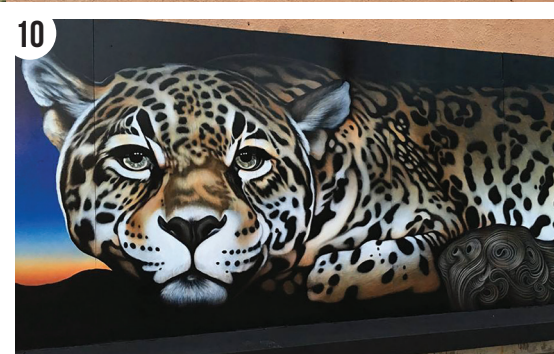
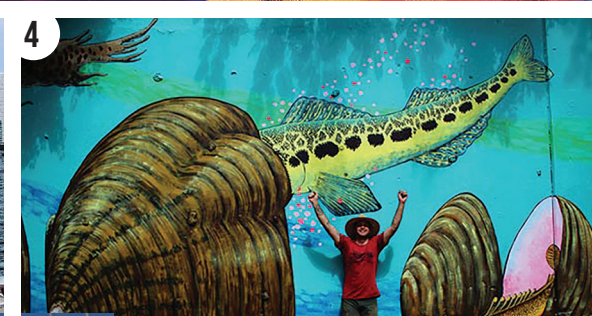
Ocean plastic pollution is predicted to outweigh all the fish in the oceans by 2050. And top climate scientists say we have under 12 years to dramatically reduce our fossil fuel dependence to avert climate catastrophe.

This fight to rein in the nation's plastics boom is one we can't afford to lose — a critical battle in our work to support threatened communities and protect marine life from the ongoing devastation inflicted by the petrochemical industry.

Blake Kopcho • Senior Oceans Campaigner
Oceans Program



WILD ART



Public art can powerfully connect people with wildlife. The Center's Endangered Species Mural Project works with artists, scientists and organizers to bring endangered wildlife to the streets of cities and towns. These murals celebrate local endangered species within communities and encourage people to make connections between conservation and community strength.

EndangeredSpeciesMuralProject.org

Roger Peet is a Portland-based artist who is coordinating this project in association with the Center for Biological Diversity.

MURALS 1) Chiricahua leopard frog, aplamado falcon, Mexican gray wolf and ocelot; El Paso, Texas. 2) Carolina northern flying squirrel, Asheville, N.C. 3) Whale, Los Angeles, Calif. 4) Southeast freshwater mussels, Knoxville, Tenn. 5) Sonoran pronghorn and Yuma clapper rail, Yuma, Ariz. 6) Watercress darter, Birmingham, Ala. 7) Austin blind salamander, Austin, Texas. 8) Yellow-billed cuckoo, Los Angeles, Calif. 9) Monarch, Minneapolis, Minn. 10) "El Jefe" the jaguar, Tucson, Ariz. 11) Grizzly bear, Oakland, Calif. 12) Mexican gray wolf and Mexican spotted owl, Silver City, N.M. 13) Mountain caribou, Sandpoint, Idaho. 14) Dakota skipper, Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock, N.D. 15) Streaked horned lark, Portland, Ore. 16) White fringeless orchid, Berea, Ky. 17) Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, Cottage Grove, Ore. 18) Spectacled eider and North Pacific right whale, Seward, Alaska.

Additional artist credits available at website.



TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ATTACKS ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT



Wolverine

As scientists around the world ring a loud alarm bell over the extinction crisis, the Trump administration has finalized three regulatory rollbacks that kneecap protections for endangered species. The Trump rules will make it harder for species to get protected as threatened or endangered in the first place; scale back protection for their critical habitat; strip species that are newly protected as threatened of nearly all protection; and take a head-in-the-sand approach to the impacts of climate change on species’ survival.

The feisty American wolverine is one of the many species that won’t get lifesaving help because of these disastrous rollbacks. Wolverines once roamed across much of the mountain West; now fewer than 300 survive in the northern Rockies and a handful of other locations. (One individual recently traveled all the way from Idaho to California’s Sierra Nevada.) Because of climate change, wolverines are swiftly losing the persistent spring snowpack they need to den and reproduce. They face a very uncertain future.

A decision on their protection is expected this year, but the new regulations don’t inspire optimism. Although warming temperatures are already causing earlier snow melt across much of the animals’ range, and climate models show habitat all but disappearing by century’s end, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may well deny protection.

Following the Trump regulations and a long tradition of hiding behind any shred of scientific uncertainty to avoid action, the Fish and Wildlife Service now limits analysis of the impacts of climate change on species like wolverines to well short of the year 2100, even though climate models from respected scientific organizations across the world, including NASA, run predictions out this far.

This lets the agency claim that a species is likely to persist in, say, 2025 — or maybe 2050 — to justify denying protection, despite far direr predictions for the more distant

future. The agency has done just that in its assessment of another northern, snow-dependent species, the Canada lynx, which is slated to have protection stripped away by next year even though scientists agree it will disappear from the lower 48 by 2100.

Even if wolverines do gain protection, it may turn out to be all but meaningless due to the new rules. Another rollback strips species listed as threatened — the protected status wolverines are likely to receive, if any — of fundamental safeguards they’ve enjoyed for more than 40 years, such as a prohibition against killing or harming them and destroying habitat.

This means that if wolverines are deemed “threatened,” their habitat may not be defended from roads, snowmobile trails, ski areas or other development in the high country — or from fur trapping, among the original causes of the animals’ decline. They almost certainly won’t get critical habitat protection, since Trump’s regulations state that species threatened by climate change (rather than direct habitat destruction) don’t need that habitat protection — clearly an absurd falsehood.

As with the climate crisis, the Trump administration is ignoring warnings from the world’s top scientists about an accelerating extinction crisis that threatens the natural world we all depend on.

In May the Intergovernmental Policy-Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released an assessment, representing the work of 550-plus scientists from more than 100 countries, warning that more than a million species are at risk of extinction globally. It said that “the biosphere, upon which humanity as a whole depends, is being altered to an unparalleled degree across all spatial scales” and that diversity is “declining faster than at any time in human history.” Finally, “nature is essential for human existence and good quality of life.”

We ignore those warnings at our own peril. The Center is fighting in court to stop Trump’s vicious rollbacks, and we’ll keep working hard for species survival.

Noah Greenwald • Director
Endangered Species Program



THE YEAR OF THE VEGGIE BURGER



Veggie burgers have come a long way since I first started eating less meat in high school. Back then there was no guarantee I'd be able to find anything on the menu when I dined out, and if I did, it was often a freezer-burned, microwaved puck of disgust. But today's veggie burgers are delicious, and they're fast becoming staples on restaurant menus.

This year demand for Impossible Burgers expanded so quickly, production couldn't keep up. Beyond Meat hit the stock market with its value surging more than 500 percent in the first month. Celebrities are backing them, too: Katy Perry even attended a Met Gala after-party dressed up as one. Plant-based burgers are everywhere, from high-end restaurants to Burger King and Tucson's own Beaut Burger (now offering a Center for Biological Diversity-themed veggie patty).

United Nations climate experts warn that to avoid the worst impacts of climate disruption and ensure food security, we need to cut back on meat and dairy. Habitat destruction caused by grazing and feed crops make meat production the greatest threat to biodiversity. As I write this, the Amazon is burning — to clear the rainforest for pasture and soy to feed livestock.

When it comes to the environmental damage caused by animal agriculture, beef is the biggest culprit by far. That's why the rise of veggie burgers is crucial.

These “burgers” aren't perfect. Many are highly processed, and some contain genetically engineered soy. But with the clock ticking on climate catastrophe, we can't wait around for perfection. We need plant-based options that are widely available, affordable and appetizing now.

We'll push for plant-based protein companies to adopt more sustainable practices. But we'll also keep pushing to get veggie patties on more menus and popularize plant-based eating to transform our food system to one that's healthier — for both people and the planet.



Stephanie Feldstein • Director
Population and Sustainability Program

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A SENSE OF URGENCY

From the Director

Kieran Suckling

The Center turned 30 this year. We've come a long way from our humble beginnings in southern New Mexico, where four inexperienced activists with a fax machine launched a campaign to stop timber companies from cutting down the nest trees of Mexican spotted owls.

We weren't the prettiest, slickest bunch — trust me, not by a long shot — but we knew the owls were under threat, and someone needed to act. If not us, then who? That one battle over spotted owls turned into a lifelong journey to save endangered species across the Southwest and then the country — and eventually beyond its borders.

Over the past three decades, we've secured Endangered Species Act protection for more than 700 plants and animals and half a billion acres of their habitat. The list of protected species (709, to be exact) runs the gamut from polar bears and pocket gophers to foxes, salamanders, garter snakes, desert fish and beluga whales. I'm proud that we've pulled those animals back from the brink of extinction, and just as proud that we've secured protection for 396 plant species and 159 invertebrates, including dragonflies, fairy shrimp, beetles, spiders, and mollusks with delightful names like “fuzzy pigtoe” and “Alabama pearlshell.”

This work is about saving all life on Earth. Each piece of nature's puzzle plays a crucial role in what makes the wild truly wild.

But this isn't the time to get too sentimental about how far we've come.

The Trump administration's attacks on the Endangered Species Act are the most serious we've ever faced. Simply put, Trump's new rules will make it harder to get species and their habitat protected. Combined with hostile legislation from the far right in Congress, hundreds of animals and plants could be condemned to extinction.

This is an all-hands-on-deck moment. Not only have we sued to halt Trump's new rules, but our organizing operation is mobilizing hundreds of volunteers around the country (check out MobilizeForTheWild.org to get involved). This is a fight we can, and must, win.

As always, thank you for standing with us.



ENDANGERED EARTH

is the membership newsletter of the Center for Biological Diversity. With the support of more than 1.6 million members and supporters, the Center works through science, law, media and activism to secure a future for all species, great or small, hovering on the brink of extinction. *Endangered Earth* is published three times yearly in January, July and October.

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California red-legged froglet
by Rob Schell

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The Center for Biological Diversity's 30-year history is unmatched: We've secured protections for more than 700 species and more than half a billion acres of wildlife habitat. Help us continue this extraordinary legacy for the next 30 years by joining the Owls Club.

By leaving a legacy gift through a bequest, or making the Center a beneficiary of your retirement plan or other estate plan, you'll be supporting the fight to save endangered wildlife for generations to come. To learn more about your legacy giving options, please call (646) 770-7206 or email owlsclub@biologicaldiversity.org.

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