

Endangered earth

SUMMER 2011

Protection At Last

A landmark agreement — the largest-ever struck for imperiled wildlife — will move 757 long-neglected plants and animals toward protection under the Endangered Species Act **6**



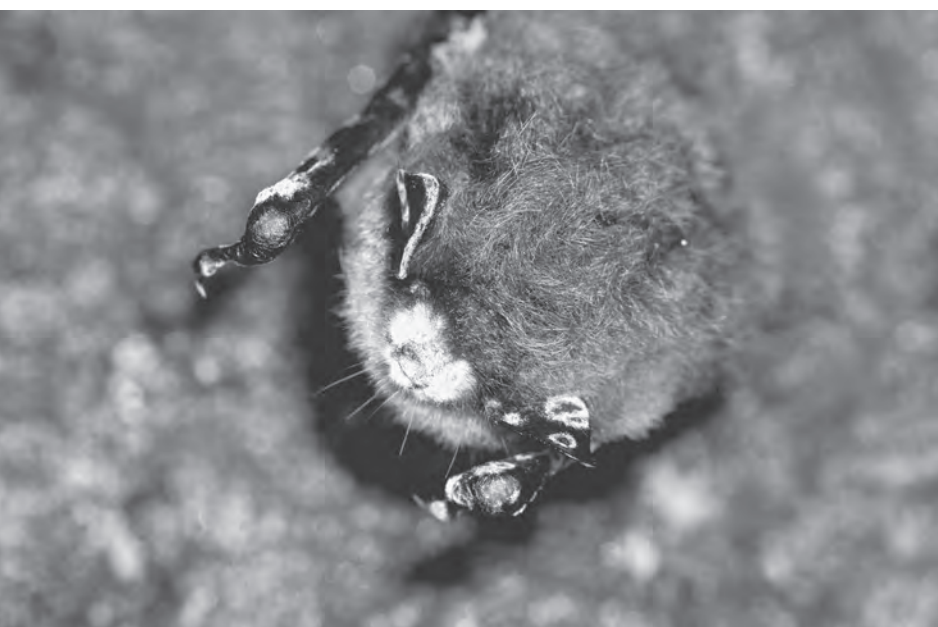
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CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Campaign to fight bat crisis gains force

In the northeastern United States, bats summering in attics, barns and old church steeples — and emerging at dusk to gobble tons of insects — are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Now, as the bat-killing disease behind that tragic trend spreads westward, the Center is ramping up our campaign to stop it.



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A little brown bat covered with the fungus that warns of white-nose syndrome. Eight other bat species have been found with the fungus, with many more at risk.

Hibernating bats in the eastern United States are disappearing at a staggering rate. The culprit is white-nose syndrome, a fast-moving, lethal disease that has already killed more than 1 million U.S. bats. If left unchecked, it threatens to expand across the country, wiping out scores of bats and possibly pushing some species to the edge of extinction.

That's why the Center for Biological Diversity this year ramped up our efforts to save North America's bats before it's too late. We're pushing Congress to fund research into this disease and urging federal land managers to take important precautionary steps to stem spread of the disease. And this summer, we've launched a new citizen-driven Save Our Bats campaign to help our supporters take action as well.

White-nose syndrome was first discovered in 2006 in a cave near Albany, N.Y., and appears to be caused by a previously unknown fungus named *Geomyces destructans*. Now in its fifth year, the disease has wrought stunning changes in bat diversity in the Northeast. While scientists know far more about white-nose syndrome than they did a few years ago, there's still much to learn about its transmission, potential treatments and species recovery.

Scientists worry the disease could spread from coast to coast, raising significant concerns about the survival of up to two dozen North American bat species. Last year, the disease was found for the first time west of the Mississippi River, so it clearly has the potential to quickly cover large distances.

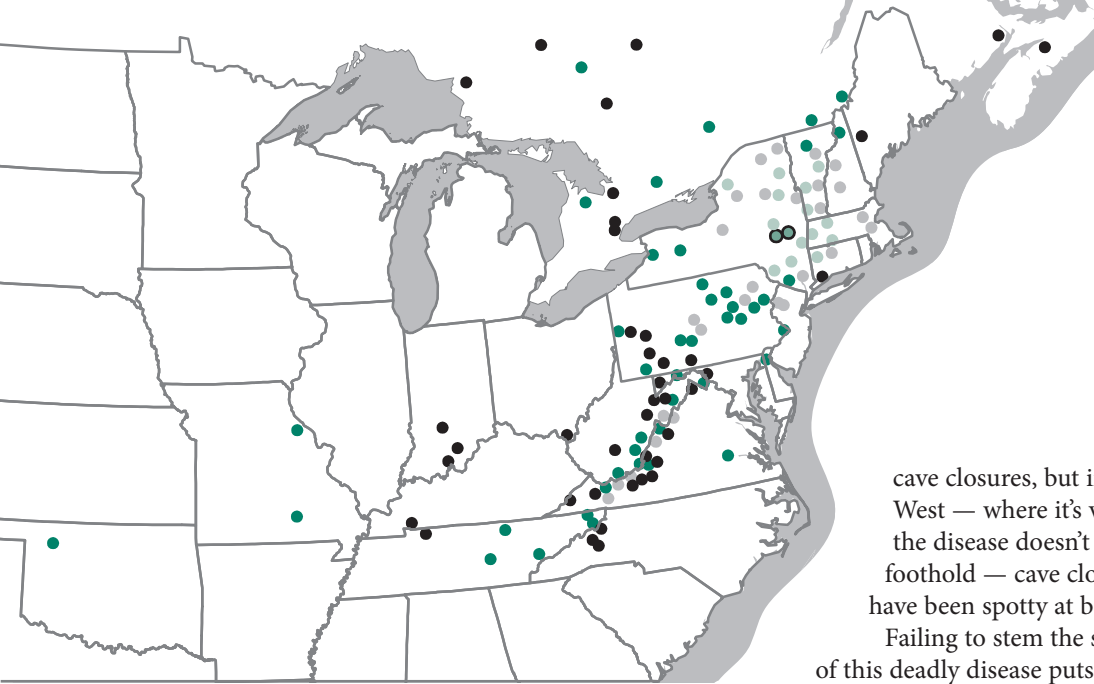
This past winter, white-nose syndrome appeared for the first time in Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Indiana and Maine, as well as New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The disease is now confirmed in 17 states and four provinces. In addition, bats in Missouri and Oklahoma have been found with *G. destructans* on their bodies, though they haven't yet showed symptomatic signs.

Bat numbers continued to plummet this past winter in places like Pennsylvania and West Virginia, where the disease was documented for the first time in the winter of 2008-09. Mortality rates are commonly greater than 95 percent in affected caves and sometimes as high as 100 percent. Bat deaths may be leveling off in regions

***On the Web:** To learn more about white-nose syndrome and how you can sign up to become a bat advocate, visit us at SaveOurBats.org and on our "Save Our Bats" Facebook page.*

Confirmed and Likely Cases of White-nose Syndrome

- Winter 2006 - 07
- Winter 2007 - 08
- Winter 2008 - 09
- Winter 2009 - 10
- Winter 2010 - 11



First discovered in New York in 2006, white-nose syndrome has since appeared in a total of 17 states and four Canadian provinces. In addition, bats in Missouri and Oklahoma have been found with the fungus that causes the disease.

cave closures, but in the West — where it's vital that the disease doesn't gain a foothold — cave closures have been spotty at best.

Failing to stem the spread of this deadly disease puts bat populations around the country at risk. And it isn't just bats that suffer.

A study published earlier this year in the journal *Science* estimated that the value of bats' pest-control services to American farmers was \$3.7 billion to \$53 billion, every year. The disappearance of bats could mean greater pesticide use and, for organic farmers, the loss of a valuable non-toxic tool for keeping bugs in check.

In June, a broad coalition of conservation, organic farming, anti-pesticide and food-safety groups joined forces in calling on Congress to appropriate \$10.8 million for research and management of white-nose syndrome. The groups also urged Congress to pass the Wildlife Disease Emergency Act to set up government infrastructure to rapidly respond to wildlife health crises like white-nose syndrome.

Ultimately, the disappearance of bats from our summer evenings is not simply a philosophical, aesthetic or even economic concern. The need for action to address white-nose syndrome stems from the vital role bats play in the natural world and in relationship to our own well-being. Ignoring their plight is, in the end, ignoring our own. ●

affected the longest, such as New York and New England, though it's too early to say for sure. One grim explanation for this bit of "good news" is that the Northeast may simply be running out of bats to die.

There have been a few promising signs on the research front. European scientists have documented white fungal growth on healthy bats of eight species in 12 countries, from France to Turkey. The European bats do not appear to suffer mortality from the fungus, and may have both physiological and behavioral traits that allow them to survive it. Biologists hold out the hope that if they can discover what allows European bats to survive, they can develop a treatment for North American bats.

There are still some questions about how the disease is spread. Biologists have concluded that bats themselves are the primary mode of *G. destructans* transmission in North America. However, most researchers also agree that human transmission is definitely possible, and may be the most likely explanation for its movement from Europe to North America. It has been documented that the fungus can be transported on boots or other gear, and fungal spores, generally, have the capacity to survive environmental extremes of temperature and drought until they find more favorable conditions for growth.

Because of that potential for human transmission, and the particularly dangerous possibility that the disease could "leapfrog" into unaffected areas, the Center has petitioned federal land managers to prohibit all-but-essential human travel into caves and abandoned mines in the lower 48 states. Agencies in the eastern United States have instituted widespread



Mollie Matteson works from the Center's Vermont office, where she heads up our Save Our Bats campaign as well as other Center efforts to protect native ecosystems and imperiled species in the Northeast.

A Treasure Trove in Trouble

Freshwater plants and animals are among the most threatened life forms on the planet. North America lost more than 120 freshwater species during the last century, and hundreds more now teeter on the brink.

Nowhere is the freshwater biodiversity crisis starker than in the American Southeast, where the combination of an incredibly rich native fauna, pervasive threats and little legal protection for rare and vanishing creatures are driving hundreds of unique and intriguing aquatic species toward extinction at a breakneck pace.

The Southeast is the world center of aquatic biodiversity, with more species of freshwater mussels, snails and crayfish than anywhere else on Earth. The region also hosts more than 60 percent of U.S. fish species, half of all dragonflies and damselflies, and more species of aquatic reptiles than any other region.

Tragically, much of this unique fauna is at risk, including more than 70 percent of the region's mussels, 48 percent of its crayfishes and 28 percent of its fishes. The major threats driving the crisis include dams, dredging, pollution, urban sprawl, mining, logging and poor agricultural practices.

To confront the crisis head-on, in spring 2010 the Center filed a petition seeking Endangered Species Act protection for 403 aquatic, riparian and wetland species in the Southeast, including 92 crustaceans, 92 mollusks, 82 plants, 47 fishes, 32 flies, 18 beetles, 15 amphibians, 13 reptiles, five butterflies, four mammals and three birds.

Most of them are hardly famous; consider the Pascagoula map turtle, Yazoo crayfish, Black Warrior waterdog, Cape Fear spatterdock and frecklebelly madtom.

Our 1,145-page scientific petition was just the beginning of a large-scale campaign

to reverse the tide of extinction in the Southeast's waterways. Now, these 400-plus species have been advanced one giant step toward Endangered Species Act safeguards, as part of our historic agreement with the Department of the Interior, struck in July, to move 757 species closer to protection under the Act.

We're also hard at work to protect freshwater species that are already federally listed but still slipping toward extinction due to a lack of aggressive action to reverse their plight or stop ongoing habitat loss.

Finally, we're excited to announce that we'll soon open a new Southeast office in Florida, a base from which to fight for the region's wildlife.

Living streams and rivers are not only vital for recreation and drinking water but also deeply linked to the rich history and culture of the Southeast. Generations have fished, swum and sometimes even been baptized in the region's waters. By protecting the vast diversity of the Southeast's river-dwelling species, we're protecting quality of life for its people as well. •

On the Web: To read more about the Center's Southeast Freshwater Extinction Crisis campaign, and to view an interactive map of all 403 species by state, visit www.biologicaldiversity.org/freshwater_extinction.



Our freshwater campaign aims to preserve entire ecosystems by protecting a diverse list of more than 400 plant and animal species. Clockwise from top right: mussel extending its fleshy fish lure, large-flowered Barbara's buttons, Alabama cave crayfish, cobblestone tiger beetle, ashy darter, Pascagoula map turtle, Florida sandhill crane.

Underwater Wonders

A diverse array of freshwater mussels in the American Southeast may be the most spectacular species you've never heard of.



Some fine morning this summer, in the last remnant of free-flowing water along the Ohio River, a few surviving males of the orange-footed pearly mussel — known to friends and family as the orangefoot pimpleback — will release their sperm into the water. If fate shines on the pimplebacks, these sperm will be siphoned into the gills of nearby females, where larvae will develop.

Trickery then comes into play as female mussels use their lures to summon a host fish. Mussel lures — which can resemble juvenile fish, crayfish, insects or worms but are actually fleshy tissues of the mussel itself — are one of nature's most spectacular examples of feminine wiles.

When a spellbound fish attempts to eat the lure, a female mussel will shoot her parasitic larvae into its mouth. Perfectly formed tiny mussels will develop on the host's gills before dropping off to seek their fortunes; if the minuscule mussels happen to drop into unsuitable habitat, they will perish.

This drama played out brilliantly for millions of years before people

drastically altered mussels' river homes. Now the balance has been tipped: Dams have changed water flow and sediment and can separate mussels from the hosts they need to reproduce; murk from sedimentation can make it impossible for potential host fish to see a mussel's lure; and silt can smother these mostly sedentary creatures, who may close their irritated siphons and wait for conditions to improve — sometimes in vain.

The rivers and streams of the Southeast boast a stunning variety of freshwater mussels — the vast majority of about 300 recognized species in the United States — with a wide array of odd shapes, colorful bodies and shells, and even more colorful

names: Cumberland monkeyface, rough pigtoe, winged spike, fluted elephantear, pistolgrip.

They play a significant ecological role, providing food for fish, crayfish, amphibians, turtles, birds and mammals. Mussels constantly filter water through their bodies, which improves water quality. Unfortunately, they also accumulate toxins just by breathing and feeding, and they are particularly sensitive to pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizers and heavy metals.

By nature, mussels lead long lives, some exceeding 100 years, giving them the longest lifespan of any freshwater invertebrate. But now, due primarily to habitat loss and degradation, at least 35 U.S. species have already gone extinct, while most remaining freshwater mussel species are in imminent danger of extinction.

One of those hanging in the balance is the aforementioned orangefoot pimpleback: Once found in nine states from Alabama to Pennsylvania, it now clings to life and reproduces in only two populations. Though it has been federally protected under the Endangered Species Act since 1976, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to allow destructive projects to harm its habitat.

The Center is working to fight a proposed marina in Kentucky's Ohio River that would fill in nearly eight acres of a significant mussel bed that is home to the orangefoot pimpleback and four other endangered or proposed endangered mussel species: the fat pocketbook, pink mucket, sheepnose and spectaclecase. •



Tierra Curry hails from Kentucky and is a conservation biologist in the Center's Flagstaff, Ariz., office. She heads up our campaign to fight Southeast freshwater species extinction.

Largest-ever deal for imperiled species protects 757 plants, animals

A decade-long Center for Biological Diversity campaign to protect 1,000 imperiled plants and animals came to fruition this summer in a set of legal settlements that will leapfrog bureaucratic and political roadblocks to push 757 species toward Endangered Species Act protection.

The deals include 403 river- and wetland-dependent species the Center wrote scientific petitions to protect last year, 254 “candidate” species from across the country for which we filed petitions or lawsuits to protect, 42 Great Basin springsnails we petitioned to protect in 2009, and 32 Pacific Northwest mollusks we petitioned to protect in 2008.

It also includes dozens of species we’ve singled out for special protection, such as the wolverine (2004), yellow-billed cuckoo (1998), Pacific walrus (2008), Miami blue butterfly (2011) and Pacific fisher (2000).

This is not only the biggest species protection agreement in the Center’s history, it’s the biggest and most complex in U.S. history. And it almost didn’t happen.

After several years of litigation and six intense, drama-filled months of negotiation, we nixed a proposed agreement in May because it was too weak and unenforceable. While restarting negotiations with us, the Department of the Interior secretly struck an even weaker deal with another conservation group that had no previous involvement with most of the species at issue.

We quickly went to court, blocking approval of the flawed deal and forcing the administration back to the table. Using this leverage

in another month of high-stakes negotiating, we secured a better, final agreement in late June while fending off an 11th-hour motion by the anti-environmental Safari Club International to block the deal.

The agreements spell out legally binding deadlines to protect 757 species between now and 2017 with initial, proposed and/or final protection decisions. Included are decisions on more than 250 plants and animals on the “candidate” list — species that government scientists say need federal protection but have shunted to a waiting list because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says other species need priority attention.

The problem is, candidate species have had to wait an average of 20 years before the government makes a decision. At least 24 have gone extinct while waiting.

Among the candidates listed in the agreement are the eastern massasauga rattlesnake, which has been on the waiting list for 30 years; the white fringeless orchid, waiting 25 years; the Oregon spotted frog, waiting 18 years; and the Pacific fisher, now waiting seven years.

The agreements address one of the most fundamental problems with Endangered Species Act implementation: government delay. Inaction only adds to the plight of species facing accelerating climate change, habitat loss, human overpopulation and other threats edging them toward extinction.

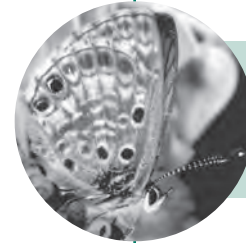
With legal deadlines now in place, these 757 species are guaranteed to get timely, science-based decisions that will, we hope, result in the protections they desperately need. •

PROTECTION TIMELINE



2011

Oklahoma grass pink orchid, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, plains bison, longfin smelt and 567 other species



2012

Miami blue butterfly, Mexican wolf, San Bernardino flying squirrel, Gunnison sage grouse and 178 other species



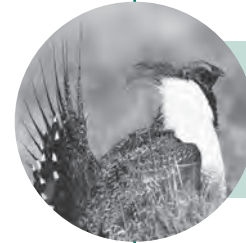
2013

Yellow-billed cuckoo, American wolverine, Oregon spotted frog, Dakota skipper and 108 other species



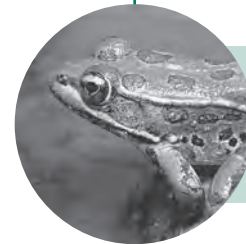
2014

Pacific fisher, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Kittlitz’s murrelet, Yosemite toad and 21 other species



2015

Greater sage grouse, New England cottontail, Montana grayling, Tucson shovel-nosed snake and 48 other species



2016

Relict leopard frog, yellow-billed loon, Tahoe yellow cress, roundtail and headwater chubs, ‘iwi and 39 other species



2017

Pacific walrus

Center fighting species attacks by Congress

This spring, Congress passed a rider stripping Endangered Species Act protections from gray wolves — marking the first time ever that legislators, not wildlife agencies, have taken those safeguards away from an endangered species.

That rider — one of the worst attacks on endangered wildlife in history — was cynically attached to a must-pass federal spending bill. The Center is fighting the measure in court, but its dangerous precedent has been set. Now any politician with a motive for pulling protection from an endangered species may bypass the scientists entrusted with the fate of rare animals and plants and simply write up a piece of legislative language determining that fate.

April's anti-wolf rider wasn't the first time members of the 112th Congress have signaled their hostility toward endangered species. The Republican-dominated U.S. House of Representatives revealed its intent to gut the Endangered Species Act in its version of the federal spending bill proposed in February — a version loaded with candy for big business, including attempts to block decades-long efforts to restore salmon to the San Joaquin River.

Meanwhile, Rep. Steve Pearce (R-N.M.) has sponsored a bill that would exempt all national forest timber cutting from environmental laws and oust threatened Mexican spotted owls from their wild habitat into so-called "sanctuaries." Pearce has also been leading a disinformation campaign aimed at blocking protection for the dunes sagebrush lizard in New Mexico and Texas. And Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) has introduced a bill to exempt the Department of Homeland Security from Endangered Species Act rules for any border-patrol operations within 100 miles of the border — despite the fact that law enforcement itself says it doesn't need such a bill.

Indirect attacks on species are proliferating too. Congress has been fast-tracking measures to speed up offshore-drilling operations that threaten sea turtles and whales in the Gulf of Mexico and Arctic species like the polar bear.

Sadly, the Obama administration and Democrats have been, at best, lukewarm supporters of the Endangered Species Act. The anti-wolf bill was sponsored by Montana Democratic Sen. Jon Tester and tacitly endorsed by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and President Barack Obama. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has also shown little love for endangered species, pushing through Bush-era plans to delist wolves and grizzlies and deny polar bears full protection. His ceaseless promotion of offshore drilling has deeply damaging effects on wildlife.

Fortunately, the Endangered Species Act has a proven track record of protecting and recovering plants and animals that would have vanished without it. Hundreds of species have seen their struggling populations soar thanks to the Act. A Center study in the Northeast, for instance, found that 93 percent increased or remained stable after being placed on the endangered species list.

But it's going to take more than a history of success to fend off attacks on the world's most powerful law for protecting species. Anticipating a series of backdoor and anti-scientific assaults on the Act, the Center is adding firepower to our endangered species team. We'll soon be hiring a national organizer to lead our defense of the Act and keep politicians from meddling in biology. •



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LEAVE A LEGACY

Make sure they'll still be around
by making sure we'll be.

Our frontlines work from the courtrooms to Congress has made the Center the nation's leading advocate for endangered species. With a commitment to our Legacy Society, made through your will, living trust, retirement plan or life-insurance policy, you can help make sure the Center will continue to give a strong lifeline to plants and animals being pushed toward extinction. **To learn more about membership in the Center's Legacy Society and how you can make a gift that will endure beyond your lifetime**, as well as provide you and your loved ones with significant tax and financial advantages, please call us at (866) 357-3349 x. 318 or email us at tjanes@biologicaldiversity.org. •

Win keeps new uranium mining away from Grand Canyon, but fight isn't over

Springs and the waterways they feed make up a tiny fraction of Grand Canyon National Park, but they harbor up to 500 times more species than the dry land around them — including species that are threatened, endangered or found nowhere else on Earth, from Kanab amber snails to white-flowering redbud trees.

Unfortunately, uranium mining on public lands bordering this world-famous, iconic park threatens to pollute its precious aquifers — and the springs the canyon's biodiversity depends on.

In good news for the region and its wildlife, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced in June that he's extending, by six months, a two-year ban on new uranium mining on 1 million acres of public lands surrounding the Grand Canyon. The next step is to make sure the Bureau of Land Management extends that temporary ban into a 20-year moratorium.

We're hopeful that the Grand Canyon will finally get the protection we've pursued for years, but we'll need to be vigilant to see it through. That will require beating back any attempts in Congress to stop enactment of a 20-year ban by slashing funding to study the effects of uranium mining. It also means making Salazar reverse course on his support for mining on existing claims, which still places species and ecosystems at risk.

The two-year ban imposed in July 2009, which temporarily blocked new mining claims and exploration across the Grand Canyon's million-acre watershed, included a proposal for the 20-year prohibition on new mining claims as well as new

development of existing claims that lack valid rights. Salazar's order this summer extended the ban to Dec. 20. Meanwhile, this September, the BLM is scheduled to release its environmental analysis, which Salazar says should include the 20-year ban as the agency's "preferred alternative."

The BLM's draft environmental impact statement failed to identify a preferred alternative or address a worst-case pollution scenario — despite hydrologists' warnings that rainwater could carry mining toxics deep into the aquifers that feed the canyon's seeps and springs. That underground pollution would be impossible to clean up and a disaster for the canyon's wildlife.

The Center and our allies have worked for years to prevent such irreversibly destructive activity in and around one of our country's greatest natural treasures. We've filed four lawsuits and organized strong public support for a long-term uranium ban — and now, with your help, we'll keep pushing the administration hard to see it through. •

Taylor McKinnon, the Center's public lands campaign director, lives and works near Grand Canyon country in Flagstaff, Ariz.



HELP US KEEP IT GRAND

Together, we can save the canyon's waters and wildlife.

More than 32,000 Center supporters sent letters this spring urging Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to ban new uranium mining around the Grand Canyon. **Thanks for your support** — your effort paid off in June when Salazar agreed to extend a two-year ban on new mines on 1 million acres around the canyon. But we can't let our guard down: We must ensure that the Bureau of Land Management imposes a long-term ban, that Congress can't derail it, and that existing mining ceases to threaten vast numbers of springs and creeks — and all the life that depends on them — with pollution from radioactive materials and heavy metals.

We can't do it alone — we need your continued support to forever ban uranium mining from the stunning landscapes that surround the Grand Canyon. To make a special gift to protect the canyon, call us at (866) 357-3349 or visit us online at BanUranium.biologicaldiversity.org. •

Putting the Freeze on Drilling

As the rush to drill for the Arctic Ocean's oil rolls recklessly forward, the Center battles back a slew of planned projects that place polar bears and other warming-threatened Arctic animals at even greater risk.

America's Arctic Ocean is vast, mysterious and teeming with life. In response to extreme low temperatures, months of darkness and icy conditions for much of the year, Arctic species have evolved in unique and amazing ways to survive in a harsh but bountiful environment. Walrus have evolved long tusks that they use to pull themselves out of the water and onto the sea ice; polar bears have developed the keen ability to smell seals, their primary prey, from up to 20 miles away.

Unfortunately the Arctic is changing rapidly, melting so quickly that summer sea ice could cease to form entirely in the next two to three decades — within the span of a polar bear's life. Adding insult to injury, big oil companies are taking advantage of the melting sea ice to push for large-scale industrial oil and gas development in the Arctic Ocean.

The Center and our allies have so far been successful in fighting back oil development in the Arctic Ocean. Last summer, we launched a successful campaign to stop BP from beginning a new "ultra-extended reach" drilling project in the Beaufort Sea off Alaska. We've stopped Shell's exploration plans every year since 2007. And we've earned vital protections for struggling species, such as last year's designation of more than 120 million acres of "critical habitat" for threatened polar bears.

But we still have our work cut out for us. Oil companies, fearful that polar bear protections will get in the way of drilling plans, have sued to overturn their essential habitat designation. We've intervened in three separate lawsuits to defend the bears' habitat. Along with our allies, we're also in court fighting Chukchi Sea oil and gas lease sales, as well as federal regulations that allow the oil industry to harm polar bears and walrus.

The threats keep mounting: Shell recently proposed an unprecedented expansion of oil exploration in both the Beaufort and Chukchi seas for 2012 and 2013. The oil giant's planned drilling is an especially terrifying prospect in the Arctic Ocean, where icy waters, dark winters, severe storms and lack of infrastructure are just a few of the hurdles making it almost impossibly difficult to respond to an oil spill.



Rebecca Noblin, staff attorney, directs the Center's Alaska campaigns from Anchorage — with a focus on protecting marine animals from global warming and oil and gas development.



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The Center won designation of more than 120 million acres of critical habitat for the polar bear last year — but our work continues to defend the bear's realm from dangerous offshore drilling.

Even in the temperate Gulf of Mexico, in one of the most developed places on Earth, oil gushed for months after the Deepwater Horizon explosion. Although the spill killed thousands of birds, sea turtles, dolphins and other wildlife, the oil industry and some in Congress remain eager to return to business-as-usual offshore drilling in the Gulf, the Arctic and beyond. On the one-year anniversary of the Gulf disaster, the Center released a policy paper outlining all of the drilling reforms that have yet to be enacted.

Despite all the reasons not to open up new areas for offshore drilling, President Obama recently announced his intention to streamline oil-drilling permitting in Alaska and expand drilling in the Gulf and off the Atlantic coast. This is terrible news. The safeguards of our landmark environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, are all that stand between endangered species and industrial drilling operations in the heart of their habitat.

The Center is committed to fighting the foolhardy rush to drill and will continue to be the voice for vulnerable species such as polar bears, walrus, sea turtles and bluefin tuna, which stand to lose everything when the places they live are turned into industrial zones. •



KEITH SLAUSEN/USFS

Safeguards sought for special Sierra Nevada fox

To save one of the rarest, most elusive mammals in the Sierra Nevada — in fact, in North America — the Center this spring filed a federal Endangered Species Act petition to make sure the range's few remaining red foxes don't disappear altogether.

Genetically and geographically distinct from red foxes across the northern hemisphere, the slender, secretive Sierra Nevada red fox is down to an astonishingly low 50 or fewer known individuals. With such small numbers, reduced genetic diversity makes the fox extraordinarily vulnerable to the threats it's faced for years, including livestock grazing; off-road and over-snow vehicles; logging; disease; competition with, and predation by, coyotes; and now the global warming-caused shrinking of its cool, high-elevation habitat.

The fox remains in about 4 percent of its historic range in only two populations, one near

Northern California's Lassen Peak and one near Sonora Pass. The Sonora Pass population wasn't even suspected to exist until last August and September, when remote cameras snapped footage of three red foxes stealing by in the darkness. No foxes had been verified south of Lassen Peak (200 miles away) since the mid-'90s.

Though the Sierra Nevada red fox has been protected under the California Endangered Species Act for 31 years, it's continued to slip fast toward extinction.

Our petition requests much-needed federal protection — which will compel the development of a recovery plan, critical habitat protection and ramped-up research — before it's too late for this singular subspecies.

"What the fox needs are uniform, range-wide protections accompanied by a robust research and monitoring effort," said Taylor McKinnon of the Center. "A federal recovery program can deliver on those needs where the states have fallen short." •

The Sierra Nevada red fox is one of North America's rarest mammals, inhabiting high-elevation reaches so secretively that one of its tiny populations wasn't suspected to exist until early last fall. Fewer than 50 of the foxes survive in just 4 percent of their historic range — now increasingly encroached upon by threats from logging to global warming — so the Center is seeking to protect them under the federal Endangered Species Act.

One-inch seahorse defended from immeasurable oil spill

This spring the Center dove into action to protect the nation's smallest seahorse from its biggest-ever environmental disaster.

With pollution persisting in the Gulf of Mexico a year after BP's catastrophic Deepwater Horizon oil spill, in April the Center petitioned to protect one of the region's tiniest and most vulnerable denizens, the dwarf seahorse, under the Endangered Species Act.

The little fish lives only in shallow seagrass areas in the Gulf, along the Atlantic Coast and in the Caribbean. The BP spill has had a deleterious effect on the species because oil — and the chemical dispersants used to break it up — are toxic to both seahorses and their seagrass habitat.

Even before the oil-spill disaster, the seahorse was in dangerous decline due to habitat loss from pollution, boat and trawl damage and global warming — not to mention ocean acidification and commercial collection for its exquisite, curly-tailed appeal.

Since the seahorse can't live without seagrass, the plant's loss directly translates to seahorse population decreases — and since 1950, more than half of Florida's seagrasses have disappeared, with similarly dramatic seagrass die-offs seen in the seahorse's range in

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The dwarf seahorse has suffered declines of its seagrass habitat since the 1950s — but never more catastrophically than from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Center’s scientific petition seeks Endangered Species Act protection for the tiny fish.

Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and the Bahamas. Much of the seagrass in the species’ remaining range was killed by the BP oil spill, causing the minuscule seahorse’s numbers to plunge to new depths.

“The dwarf seahorse and its seagrass habitat are too important to be sacrificed to Big Oil,” said Center biologist Tierra Curry. “We’ll continue working to make sure this tiny creature gets the federal protection it needs to recover.”

One of the most unique fishes in the sea, the dwarf seahorse engages in elaborate social and reproductive behaviors, with males giving live birth to mini-adults and partners forming lifelong monogamous bonds, which they reinforce each morning with a greeting ritual. •

Largest-ever pesticides suit brought to save endangered wildlife

In January, culminating years of painstaking work to keep toxic chemicals away from rare and vulnerable animals and ecosystems, the Center filed a massive suit against the EPA over the impacts of hundreds of pesticides on more than 200 endangered and threatened species.

The lawsuit, filed with our partner, Pesticide Action Network, is the most comprehensive legal action ever brought under the Endangered Species Act to protect species from pesticides.

A series of Center-led lawsuits had previously forced the EPA to consult on the impacts of scores of pesticides on endangered species in California: A 2006 agreement restricted 66 pesticides in the state and prompted analysis of their effects on red-legged frogs, while a 2010 settlement required study of the effects of 75 pesticides on 11 San Francisco Bay Area endangered species.

But January’s suit is the first with broad, national scope, seeking a review of whether hundreds of already-approved pesticides affect hundreds of species across the country — including the Florida panther, California condor, piping plover, black-footed ferret, arroyo toad, Indiana bat, bonytail chub and Alabama sturgeon.

More than a billion pounds of pesticides are used every year in the United States, and the EPA has approved more than 18,000 different types. Extensive scientific studies show widespread and pervasive contamination in groundwater, drinking water and wildlife habitats throughout the country.

Some pesticides act as endocrine disruptors, meaning they interfere with natural hormones, damaging reproductive function and offspring and causing developmental, neurological and immune problems in both wild animals and humans. Endocrine-disrupting pesticides cause sexual deformities such as intersex fish (with male and female parts) that can’t reproduce; some scientists believe pesticides may also play a role in the recent colony collapse

disorder — the disappearance of bees that are agriculturally important pollinators.

Besides hurting wildlife, many EPA-approved pesticides are also linked to cancer and other severe health effects in humans. •



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The piping plover is one of more than 200 species across the country that the Center seeks to save from pesticide poisoning. Earlier this year, the Center filed a sweeping lawsuit against the EPA for its failure to examine the impacts of hundreds of already-approved pesticides on endangered and threatened wildlife.

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A Historic Moment

From the Director

Kieran Suckling

I'M PROUD TO SAY THE CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY MADE HISTORY

this summer with the largest-ever imperiled-species protection agreement in the United States.

After months of touch-and-go negotiations and dramatic legal actions, we reached a landmark deal with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in July that will push 757 species toward Endangered Species Act protection.

Our endangered species program spearheaded the negotiations and underlying litigation that brought the Department of the Interior to the table. Seeking to protect America's 1,000 most-imperiled and least-protected plants and animals, the program worked for a decade to achieve this historic breakthrough. Noah Greenwald, who has been at the Center for 14 years and at the helm of our endangered species program for three years, deserves tremendous credit for persevering so long and with so much success.

The deal will affect species in every corner of the country, from the Pacific walrus in Alaska and the wolverine in the Rockies to the West Coast's ashy storm petrel and the magnificent array of snails and mollusks that populate streams and wetlands in the Southeast. Many of the species have been waiting for decades, including some 250 on the government's "candidate" list — where species languish, on average, 20 years without protection until their future is decided.

The agreement didn't come easy. After months of intensive negotiations with the Fish and Wildlife Service in late 2010 and early 2011, the process broke down. After a secretly struck, weak and unenforceable deal was announced between the government and another group, the Center blocked the deal with swift legal action and got ourselves back to the negotiating table — this time with even more leverage.

The deal addresses one of the biggest threats to imperiled plants and animals: delayed protection. Every time the government puts off a decision on whether a species gets help from the Endangered Species Act, it's another day lost, when climate change, habitat destruction, human overpopulation, logging, grazing and other threats gain the advantage and species are edged closer to extinction. We now have a concrete schedule for decisions on protection for 757 American species — the largest such agreement ever made.

None of this could have happened without your support, participation and insistence that, on our watch, these rare plants and animals will always have a place to live. It's a historic moment for our work. We hope you'll celebrate with us. •

FRONT COVER IMAGE: AMERICAN WOLVERINE © BRIAN CALLAHAN/BCS1@WOWWAY.COM

Endangered earth

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