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Center for Biological Diversity  
Twenty Years of Saving Species



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

I was 24 years old when Peter, Robin, Todd, and I started the Center. We had no idea how much creativity and range lay dormant in environmental laws that had gone largely unnoticed by those who walked the corridors of power. We were certain of just one thing: Vanishing species needed far, far stronger representation than they were getting.

As the years passed, I discovered the world can be strangely permeable. Whole landscapes that are slated to fall before chainsaws or bulldozers — such as the ponderosa pine forests of the Southwest — can be saved by some vision and a solar-powered fax machine.

Our goals have always leapt up to exceed our abilities. As fast as we grow — and we've gone from a handful of activists in a bog to a staff of 60 in 9 states and the District of Columbia, with 17 full-time lawyers and 12 full-time scientists — bigger threats and harder-to-tackle problems appear. We've protected more than 360 species and 100 million acres of habitat in these two decades, but the task only gets more urgent.

There's no denying that the extinction crisis, increasingly driven by climate change, worsens daily. And every day we get more creative and ambitious with the strategies we embrace. We keep chalking up the big species and habitat victories that are our bread and butter — just this spring we secured the protection of 24.9 million acres for the imperiled Canada lynx across a broad swath of northern forest from Washington to Maine — but at the same time we're setting far-reaching precedents in realms like clean air and marine law that will help safeguard species from global warming.

I've never flagged in my conviction that the work of stopping extinctions is some of the most vital work on Earth. As time goes on I understand more and more deeply how the richness of animal and plant life on this planet gives meaning to our world and the people in it. I can't count how many mornings I've opened my e-mail to find a note from a member whose life has been illuminated by an encounter with an endangered creature, be it a wolf, an eagle, or a squirrel.



There's no doubt in my mind: The fight to save species is also a fight to save ourselves — from aloneness, from impoverishment, from a future world less fascinating and lovely than the past. And I believe we can win that fight.

To those who are already with us, thank you. To those who will be, welcome.

Kieran Suckling  
Executive Director

## FORGING A NEW PATH

contributed by Douglas Bevington

The Center for Biological Diversity embodies an important new form of environmental activism.

In the late 1980s, American biodiversity protection advocates faced a dilemma of choosing between two paths for protecting wildlife, each with notable limitations. The first path was represented by national environmental organizations that relied on the insider strategy commonly used by interest groups in Washington, D.C., which depended on privileged access to politicians to influence policy. The problem with this strategy was that it regularly led these organizations to avoid taking strong stands on controversial issues when they believed such stands might hurt their access and influence.

The second path consisted of activists who engaged in direct actions such as sitting in old-growth trees to deter loggers from cutting them down.

Because these activists did not rely on an insider strategy they could be as bold as needed, but their direct-action tactics rarely saved biodiversity on a large scale.

Faced with the limitations of each of these two paths, the founders of the Center chose instead to create a third path. Center activists embraced legal tactics, but rejected the constraints of the insider strategy. They were willing to file lawsuits against the federal government for its failure to enforce its own environmental laws in cases the national organizations avoided as potentially controversial.

As a result, the Center has been able to apply the Endangered Species Act far more extensively than had ever been attempted before, achieving an unprecedented increase in species protection over the past two decades. The Center has thus offered the environmental movement an exciting

new path for saving biodiversity that is simultaneously bold and influential.

*Douglas Bevington, Ph.D., is the forest program director for Environment Now and author of The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism From the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear (Island Press, 2009).*

# 20 TWENTY YEARS ON THE GILA RIVER



**Razorback sucker** | *Xyrauchen texanus*  
*The razorback sucker is long gone from the upper Gila River, but the Center has worked since our inception to see the Gila restored — and the upper Gila's other native fish, such as the spikédace and loach minnow, survive.*

The remote, mountainous headwaters of the Gila River have been a breeding ground for revolutionary ideas for more than a century. Geronimo was born here and Mangas Coloradas waged war here. In the 1920s the Gila taught Aldo Leopold to think like a mountain and became America's first official wilderness area. Earth First! was born here in the 1980s, and the Sagebrush Rebellion was revived here in the 1990s. And in 1989, the Gila became the home base and inspiration for three of the Center's founders, Kierán Suckling, Peter Galvin, and Todd Schulke.

Shortly after the three announced their intention to protect and restore the Gila's 10 million acres of forests and rivers, newspapers were running headlines that ranged from "Saving a River" to "Going for the Throat." Some applauded the trio's blistering activist pace; others printed letters to the editor that were in fact death threats.

Armed with a windmill, three motorcycles, and a large natural history library, the Center's founders cataloged the river basin's rare species and began to fire off petitions, appeals, and press releases. The Gila and Apache trouts, southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, Gila chub, loach minnow, spikédace, and Chiricahua leopard frog were the focus of their first campaign to restore the region's rivers, where once-majestic streamside forests had been all but destroyed by a century of livestock grazing; native elk, river otters, and grizzly bears had been driven extinct; and wolves and jaguars had been pushed to the brink.

Launching a series of lawsuits, scientific studies, and high-profile media battles, they challenged the entrenched management practices of federal agencies, and in 1998 — just nine years later — secured far-reaching agreements that took cattle off more than 330 miles

of rivers. And now, a decade after the cows, trees overhang the riverbanks and trap fertile dirt where they topple. Floods no longer tear out the soil, but overflow the narrowing channel and seed young trees ever further from the riverbanks. The sound of beaver tails slapping the water punctuates the birdsong, and flycatchers, loach minnow, and spikédace flit once more through the shadows.

The Center remains rooted and active in the Gila. Where once we reintroduced wolves, we're now on the cusp of reintroducing otters. When trespasses occur, we're there to ensure the river is defended; Schulke promotes forest restoration, fights dams, and runs rapids from Silver City, where Suckling still lives part-time. Center predator specialist Michael Robinson monitors wolf and river recovery from among the high pines.



## A BARE-KNUCKLED TRIO TAKES ON BIG TIMBER

“After nearly a decade of bare-knuckled activism, the Center for Biological Diversity has expanded the primer on how to use the legal system to torque agencies into obeying the letter of the Endangered Species Act” — *High Country News: “A Bare-knuckled Trio Goes After the Forest Service”*

When retired U.S. National Forest chief Jack Ward Thomas published his memoir in 2004, he singled out a settlement agreement with the Center for Biological Diversity as one of his greatest regrets. The terms of the settlement over Southwest logging, he complained, were far too restrictive of cutting trees, admitted too much culpability, and required too much scientific research on imperiled species.

Thomas was referring to one of the most sweeping legal settlements in the history of U.S. public lands. The Center’s hard-won agreement led to a 16-month injunction on virtually all logging on 11 national forests in Arizona and New Mexico. To get out from under the injunction, the Forest Service would eventually submit to a

radical reform of its timber program, elevation of endangered species to its primary management focus, and an effective end to the old-growth logging industry that had dominated the region’s forests for 100 years. By the time the dust settled, most large-tree timber companies had left the region, opening up opportunities for small-scale restoration-oriented companies to thrive.

The battle began with scientific petitions to list the Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk as endangered species by Center founder and emergency-room doctor Robin Silver in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Along the way, a federal judge threatened to throw Jack Ward Thomas in jail; the Center’s lawyer was physically attacked

by the Forest Service’s lawyer during a very intense, very long negotiating session; pro-logging protesters rallied by the dozens in Phoenix while anti-logging protesters rallied by the hundreds in Albuquerque; a curious scandal called “Owl-gate” briefly caught the public’s attention; and 8 million acres of forest were designated as critical habitat for wildlife.

Since then, Robin Silver has retired from medicine to devote himself full time to activism but still finds time to photograph grizzly bears in Alaska and flycatchers in the Southwest. And *Silver v. Thomas*, in all its intricacies and chapters, is to this day one of the most cited legal cases in timber sale battles across the country.

**Northern goshawk** | *Accipiter gentilis atricapillus*

*Our fight for the old-growth-dependent northern goshawk and Mexican spotted owl, in the Center’s formative years, rewrote conservation history by effectively shutting down large-scale industrial logging on all federal forest lands in the American Southwest.*



## FRIENDS OF THE OWLS

**Burrowing owl** | *Athene cunicularia*  
*An 1860s ornithologist reported that “burrowing owls stood on every little knoll” around San Diego, but by this decade urban development had nearly wiped out breeding owls from all of the California coast — prompting the Center to seek statewide protections for this diminutive underground dweller.*



Center co-founders Peter Galvin, Todd Schulke, and Kierán Suckling met while surveying for owls in the forests of New Mexico, and their first joint political action saved an owl's nest in an ancient pine from logging. Galvin discovered the southernmost record of a boreal owl in the United States while surveying, and started a group called Friends of the Owls shortly before co-founding the Center.

Two decades later, our Global Owl Project reaches out to hundreds of owl researchers, scientists, geneticists, and defenders in 56 countries around the world, and the Center's enduring relationship with owls has produced far-reaching protections for forests and other landscapes across the West and beyond.

Our work on the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl changed the course of development in Arizona, while our petition to list the California spotted owl has led to improved forest practices in the Sierra Nevada and national forests throughout Southern California. Our epic battle to save the Mexican spotted owl, whose population had dropped to 2,000 birds in the wild by the late 1980s, achieved protected status for the animal under the Endangered Species Act in 1993, and we've also petitioned to list the western burrowing owl under the California Endangered Species Act. Internationally, the Global Owl Project's work with the World Owl Trust in Nepal has brought owl education to scores of Nepalese youths.

## BRINGING BACK THE GRAY WOLF

**Mexican gray wolf** | *Canis lupis baileyi*  
*Having dwindled to a few last individuals after decades of extermination by the government, the Mexican gray wolf finally stepped back into the Gila wildlands it once roamed as a result of one of the Center's earliest legal victories.*



After passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, five of the last Mexican gray wolves left alive — straggling survivors of decades of systematic, government-led killing campaigns — were captured in Mexico. The plan was to breed and release: A 1982 recovery plan called for a next generation of wolves to be set free in the wild in at least two regions.

But bureaucrats hedged. New Mexico's game department suggested the White Sands Missile Range — a former nuclear test site with no history of wolves — but the Army refused. The game department opposed setting wolves free in the state's wildest corner, the Gila National Forest, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — the federal agency that had exterminated the wolf population in the first place — cited the Army's opposition to call a halt to the reintroduction plan.

Enter the Wolf Action Group. In 1990, with Center founders and their allies leading the charge, the group filed a lawsuit to compel reintroduction. In 1993 the suit was settled, and the first wolves stepped into freedom in the Gila ecosystem five years later.

Since then, the Center has won battles to increase wolf reintroductions, block livestock-industry attempts to cancel the wolf program, save wolves from being killed, and force the current review of the entire program to speed up recovery efforts and strike down Bush administration policies encouraging capture and killing of wolves. In 2009, we still patrol the remote parts of the Gila where these beautiful, social animals are struggling to raise their pups.



## LAW OF THE DESERT



**Desert tortoise** | *Gopherus agassizii*  
*The enduring desert tortoise fittingly became the centerpiece of one of the most epic battles for endangered species in the nation's history. A Center lawsuit for the tortoise and 23 other species shielded millions of acres of California desert from death by a thousand cuts — including mining, grazing, and off-road vehicle abuse.*

The American Southwest contains some of the country's fastest-growing cities, and the Center has worked since our beginnings to remove threats to the endangered species of the desert Southwest. Here, the fragile interdependencies of evolution are easy to disturb and very difficult to repair. Since the early 1990s we've been major players in keeping urban sprawl, cattle grazing, mining, dam building, and off-road vehicle use from driving species extinct in all four of the great American deserts: the Sonoran, Mojave, Chihuahuan, and Great Basin.

In one of the seminal endangered species battles in U.S. history, we targeted the 25-million-acre California Desert Conservation Area — about a quarter of the state's total land mass — revamping management of the region from top to bottom. The diverse Mojave/Sonoran area comprises sand dunes, canyons, dry lakes, 90 mountain ranges, and 65 wilderness areas and is home to long lists of rare

and vulnerable species, including the desert tortoise and Peninsular bighorn sheep. Partially protected since 1976, the region still suffered the ravages of mining, grazing, off-road vehicles, and other destructive uses until the Center stepped up to defend it.

In 2000, the Center and our allies filed suit against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and Fish and Wildlife Service on behalf of 24 endangered species hurt by poor land management. A series of sweeping settlement agreements over the next few years brought higher levels of protection to millions of acres. The government prohibited mining on 3.4 million acres, reduced or prohibited livestock grazing on 2 million acres, prohibited off-road vehicles on more than 550,000 acres, closed more than 4,500 miles of roads, and increased wildlife surveying, monitoring, and conservation plans. In the words of Dr. Dave Morafka, former member of the federal desert tortoise recovery team:

“The Center for Biological Diversity has won more habitat protection and more enforcement of environmental laws in the California Desert Conservation Area in one year than all previous efforts in the past 20 years.”

The same year, we won a highly significant victory in the Algodones Dunes — Ground Zero for off-road battles across the country — that put 49,310 delicate acres in the dunes off limits to off-roading. In 2006, we filed suit to curb excessive off-road vehicle use and grazing in critical habitat for the desert tortoise. Next, we intervened successfully in lawsuits seeking to build roads through Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley National Park; we also stopped the Bureau of Land Management from building new roads through spectacular Furnace Creek in the White Mountains, home of the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher.

# SPRAWL SHOWDOWN

“The Center for Biological Diversity, a battle-seasoned nonprofit organization . . . has prevailed against adversaries as diverse as local city councils, California’s largest developers, and the Bush administration.” — *California Lawyer: “Showdown at Tejon Ranch”*



**California condor** | *Gymnogyps californianus*

*The last bastion of wild habitat for the endangered California condor — Tejon Ranch, one of the most biologically rich uninterrupted expanses of wild land in California — faces encroachment by a series of sprawling developments that the Center has staunchly fought.*

Most sprawl development is happening on private lands, and the laws that cover public-lands conservation often have limited relevance there. The difficulties of negotiating this gap — and potential conflicts between the rights of endangered species and the rights of property owners — turn away many groups from engaging on private-land problems.

Yet private lands are very important to endangered species, who don’t know the difference between suburban subdivisions and a national park. So the Center has leapt into the fray with unique and powerful strategies to keep sprawl from killing rare animals and plants.

We’ve been closely involved in the country’s two biggest and most precedent-setting habitat conservation plans. Our early spearheading of both the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Plan and the Tucson area’s Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan made a crucial difference to the way those urban areas

approach protection of endangered species and, in fact, development in general. While neither plan is perfect, their impacts have been profound: To this day both are regarded as models for urban-growth and endangered species planning nationwide.

Both plans hinged on small, endangered birds, linchpins for our advocacy and leverage we needed to reform business-as-usual development. The San Diego plan turns on the well-being of the California gnatcatcher, while the Tucson plan has its roots in the fight to save the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl — a tiny, extremely rare raptor that persists in isolated populations on Tucson’s urban fringes. With both planning processes, developers’ habit of building highways or blading cactus and other vegetation with no regard for wildlife was brought up short. (Under the Bush administration, the pygmy owl’s protections would come under renewed attack from developers, and undefended by government, they were removed. The Center is now fighting to re-establish those protections with a new scientific petition and legal process.)

Increasingly, our Urban Wildlands program, under the energetic direction of Adam Keats, works on sprawl-related problems in concert with our Climate Law Institute to take our on-the-ground land-use battles to the air. Over the past few years we’ve successfully

challenged public agencies in California for their failure to consider greenhouse gases and global warming in a series of landmark lawsuits affecting, among other businesses, superstores like Wal-Mart, power plants, and megadairies.



**Pima pineapple cactus** | *Coryphantha scheeri* var. *robustispina*

*Habitat loss to urban sprawl has rendered the golden blossoms of the endangered Pima pineapple cactus rarer still. The cactus is one of 23 Tucson-region plants and animals whose role in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan — which the Center helped spearhead — has transformed the region’s approach to urban growth.*



# THE CLIMATE LAW INSTITUTE



**Polar bear** | *Ursus maritimus*

*The Center's successful efforts to gain an Endangered Species Act listing for the polar bear thrust its plight — and the global warming-caused meltdown of its Arctic sea-ice habitat — into a worldwide spotlight. Demonstrating the reach of laws like the Endangered Species Act to arrest global warming is a key goal of our newly launched Climate Law Institute.*

The Center's brand-new Climate Law Institute is the product of a program that has already achieved the first-ever legal protections for species specifically threatened with extinction by global warming and brought worldwide attention to the plight of the polar bear and the Arctic meltdown.

In 2001, we made our first foray into saving species in imminent peril from climate change: the Kittlitz's murrelet. Before our murrelet petition, no one had ever tried to get a species protected because it was threatened by warming. A beautiful, little-studied seabird that depends for its nesting on glaciers that are swiftly melting, the murrelet was petitioned for Endangered Species Act protection by Center lawyer Kassie Siegel, now the director of our Climate Law Institute. The Bush administration's Fish and Wildlife Service, unable to repudiate the science but unwilling to help the species, declared the bird's listing "warranted but precluded" (read "urgently needed but denied anyway").

Next, in 2004, we petitioned for elkhorn and staghorn corals in Florida and the Caribbean. These golden relatives of the sea anemone became the first global warming-threatened species in the world to gain protection in 2006, and by 2008, thanks to our continuing advocacy, had been granted 3,000 square miles of protected critical habitat. Our 2005 polar bear petition needed the thrust of legal action to force the government to take action, but our persistence in court — in concert with one of the most successful endangered species media campaigns in history, which brought the polar bear into the national and international spotlights — finally resulted in a threatened listing for the iconic species in 2008.

Our climate activism has now become an overarching component of all our programs, and extends far beyond individual species campaigns to precedent-setting litigation and policy advocacy. We've played a key role in ensuring that California lives up to

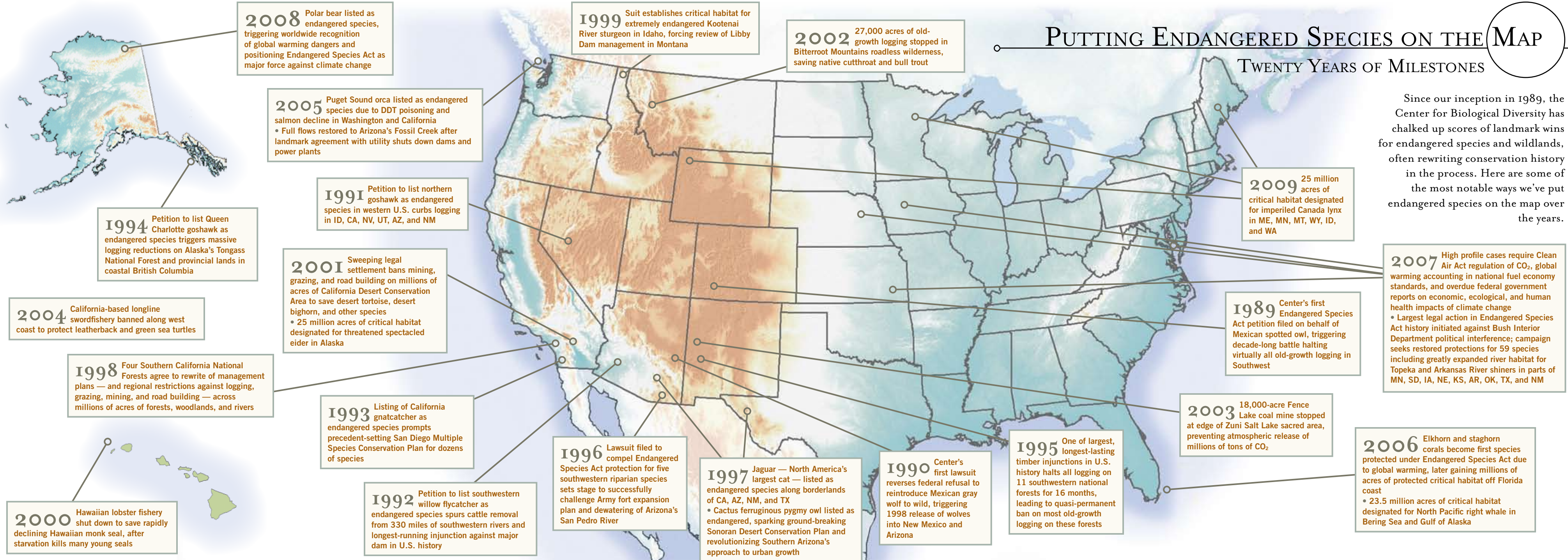
its ambitious commitment to lead the states in planning for, and protecting against, global warming, and we filed the first-ever petition for protection of an endangered species from global warming under state law by asking California to protect the American pika. The Center has helped lead the charge to raise fuel-economy standards nationally and successfully litigated all the way to the Supreme Court to compel the regulation of CO<sub>2</sub>, the largest contributor to greenhouse gas pollution, under the Clean Air Act. And in 2007 we won a landmark case, under the Global Change Research Act of 1990, challenging federal suppression of climate science.



# PUTTING ENDANGERED SPECIES ON THE MAP

## TWENTY YEARS OF MILESTONES

Since our inception in 1989, the Center for Biological Diversity has chalked up scores of landmark wins for endangered species and wildlands, often rewriting conservation history in the process. Here are some of the most notable ways we've put endangered species on the map over the years.





## SEA CHANGES

**Loggerhead sea turtle** | *Caretta caretta*  
*In one of our most powerful victories for ocean life, the Center shut down two of the Pacific's most destructive fisheries — the California-based longline fishery for swordfish and nearshore gillnet fishery — to protect loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles.*



The world's oceans are a vast, last frontier and a crucial component of planetary life support. The Center's Oceans Program, under the visionary leadership of director Brendan Cummings, has protected more marine species under the Endangered Species Act than any other group over the past decade.

Since the turn of the millennium, Center petitions and litigation have brought new and powerful legal protection to dozens of ocean-dwelling species. Among others: In 2001, we achieved the historic first Endangered Species Act listing of a marine invertebrate, California's white abalone. We secured listings for the Puget Sound orca and southwest Alaska sea otter in 2005; for elkhorn and staghorn corals, the first species to be listed for which global warming was recognized as a threat, in 2006; and for the Cook Inlet beluga whale as well as the world's most endangered whale, the North Pacific right whale, in 2008.

Our campaign to reduce wasteful and tragic fisheries bycatch — the “collateral

damage” of the fishing industry, which kills untold numbers of vulnerable animals yearly — has been responsible for far-reaching and highly significant closures, as well as reduction of inhumane fishing practices. A Center lawsuit shut down a California-based longline fishery to protect sea turtles; another suit curtailed a California drift-gillnet fishery to protect both sea turtles and whales; and a coalition suit shut down a lobster fishery in Hawaii and offered vital protection to endangered Hawaiian monk seals. The threat of a Center lawsuit alone also shut down a nearshore gillnet fishery to protect sea otters and seabirds. We continue to advocate for Endangered Species Act protection for numerous species imperiled by fisheries, be they sea turtles and seabirds that drown as bycatch, or abalone and sturgeon that are themselves the fisheries' targets.

Most recently, we've launched an ambitious legal campaign against ocean acidification — next to global warming, and closely associated with it because of the role of CO<sub>2</sub> in both processes

— possibly the greatest known human-caused environmental threat to life on Earth. The Center is way out in the vanguard in seeking regulation to stop our oceans from becoming more acidic: Though the science is in to show that pH is dropping in oceans worldwide — threatening, just for starters, the survival of all shell-forming organisms — no other group has yet stepped up to fight for legal remedies.

Our campaign to regulate ocean acidification under the Clean Water Act gained a foothold in 2007 with petitions to all U.S. coastal states and the Environmental Protection Agency. In January of this year we won an early victory when the agency agreed to review Clean Water Act standards in the context of ocean acidification, with rulemaking beginning in April.



# GODS OF SMALL THINGS

“The Center for Biological Diversity cares as much about the unarmored threespine stickleback as it does a cathedral forest of trees, which is why it is reinventing the environmental movement.” — *LA Weekly: “The Gods of Small Things”*

The Center is well-known for sticking up for the little guy. Rather than concentrating all our resources on protecting so-called charismatic megafauna, we spread the wealth to make sure threatened microfauna and flora don’t get short shrift.

Even if we didn’t have the unknowable and extraordinary intrinsic value of all life forms to consider, we’d still be compelled to act on behalf of flies and fairy shrimp and plants with outlandish names like the robber baron cave spider, the Nichols Turk’s head cactus, and the Amargosa niterwort. That’s because the wholeness and functioning of ecosystems often depends on the tiny organisms most people find it as hard to relate to as to identify in a lineup. Difficult as it may be sometimes to rally the troops behind a cave spider or an obscure mollusk, in scientific terms it’s as crucial to defend their survival as it

is the big shots on the other end of the food chain.

Our list of micro-friends includes valuable, little-known pollinators like the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly, which looks like a flying jewel; butterflies like the Quino and Bay checkerspots, for which we achieved endangered species act listings and critical habitat, respectively; and the Indiana bat, urgently threatened by the ominous white-nose syndrome now spreading to bats throughout the Northeast. To save the all-but-invisible Riverside fairy shrimp, we went up against Steven Spielberg’s DreamWorks in 1997 to try to stop its massive “Playa Vista” development slated for one of Los Angeles’ last remaining wetlands, and we twice took the Bush administration to court over a plant called the Munz’s onion.

The Center secured first-ever Endangered Species Act protection for a marine invertebrate, the white abalone; for 11 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies, all descended from a single female who migrated from the mainland some 5 million years ago; and, through the Biodiversity Legal Foundation, also for the Johnson’s seagrass, whose underwater meadows provide vital forage for endangered Florida manatees and green sea turtles. We’ve fought for the rights of a plant called the squalid milk-vetch; the mythically rare giant Palouse earthworm, which is light pink, smells of lilies, is reputed to spit, and can grow up to three feet long; and the glamorous red-and-black American burying beetle, which can smell fresh carrion from two miles away.



**Delhi Sands flower-loving fly** | *Rhaphiomidas terminatus abdominalis*

*The Delhi Sands flower-loving fly, one of the smallest creatures to retain the Center in its defense, is not your typical poster child. But this tiny pollinator plays an important role in the Southern California dunes ecosystem from which it takes its name — the only place on Earth where it exists.*

# SCIENCE FOR SPECIES

Science underpins all the Center's programs to save endangered species. Our biologists, ecologists, statisticians, and mapping specialists have done extensive research on species and their habitats to produce the hundreds of Endangered Species Act petitions that are the bread and butter of our work. These petitions require compilation of all known data on the species — biology, habitat requirements, status, and management — and have taken Center scientists into the field to collect data on species like the spotted owl, narrow-headed garter snake, Oregon spotted frog, and a seabird called Cassin's auklet.

We've also researched and published ambitious studies of the varied ecosystems endangered species depend on, including forests, oceans, deserts, and rivers. Center staff teamed up with university scientists to publish

a paper on ecological restoration of southwestern ponderosa pine forests in the noted journal *Ecological Applications*, for instance, and Center scientist Shaye Wolfe developed a model to understand the impacts of ocean climate change on the Cassin's auklet.

We've conducted groundbreaking research on the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act, compiling a massive database on all listed species that has made the Center a major clearinghouse for biodiversity information — one that informs the national debate on endangered species from *New York Times* editorials to congressional policy disputes. Our peer-reviewed papers based on these data — publications that have evaluated whether listing, critical habitat, and recovery plans result in improved status of endangered species and whether the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service is effectively implementing the Endangered Species Act — are widely referenced by others in the field.

Increasingly, our research is focusing on broad groups of species that form a key component of planetary diversity. Center scientists Noah Greenwald and Curt Bradley recently published a paper analyzing whether the species of Nevada are adequately protected; other Center staff are working to identify groups of species that qualify for protection under the Endangered Species Act because they occur in habitats that are urgently threatened by climate change — including coral reefs, mountaintops, and rivers.



**Red-legged frog | *Rana draytonii***  
*The California red-legged frog has become emblematic of our work to uphold the role of science in endangered species management and enlist the courts to fight unsound, politically motivated decisions. Our Watchfrogging Corruption campaign, inspired by this humble amphibian, looks to restore key protections to dozens of species — including more than 1 million acres of habitat for the frog.*

## NATURE'S LEGAL EAGLES

“Few groups can wield the courtroom clout of the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity.” — *Tucson Citizen: “Nature’s Legal Eagles”*

The justice system has long been, in essence, a silent partner to the Center: When it comes to extinction, the law is on our side. Due in large part to the rigorous scientific underpinnings of the Endangered Species Act, an unparalleled 93 percent of the cases we've brought to save species and lands have resulted in success. This means that even when we don't have to end up in court on an issue, we operate from a strong negotiating position.

Over the past 20 years, we've protected more than 360 species and 100 million acres of habitat by using the citizen suit and other key provisions of the Endangered Species Act to compel the government to uphold its own statutory promises to wildlife. We've also greatly expanded our litigation capacity to reach into other arenas through other laws — the National Environmental Policy Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Clean Air and Water acts, and National Historic Preservation Act, to name but a few.

During the 1990s, a decade dominated by the Bush administration's assault on science and endangered species, we used litigation in a highly strategic, targeted way to expose political corruption and force reform. In the biggest endangered species litigation action ever undertaken, we launched a campaign to save 59 imperiled species and more than 8 million acres of habitat that were wrongly denied federal protection because of political interference by Bush bureaucrats in the Department of the Interior.

The campaign is ongoing, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already agreed to redo critical habitat designations for 16 species, including the California red-legged frog; arroyo toad; vermilion darter; Mississippi gopher frog; four invertebrates in New Mexico; Santa Ana sucker; and seven plants from California, Oregon, and North Carolina. New proposed habitat for the California red-legged frog totals about 1.8 million acres.



# MEDIA MOGULS

Creative, low- or no-cost ways of reaching out to the American public through media have played a major part in the Center's strategy from the very first time we leveraged a newspaper story into government action back in 1989 in rural New Mexico. By 2007, with a budget 17 to 50 times smaller than other national environmental groups, we ranked fifth in the nation for sheer number of earned media stories; per budget dollar, we generated far more stories than any other group.

We've quickly branched out into new media too, aiming to bring endangered species into the lives of the young and the urban. Taking advantage of the explosive growth of cell phones, we've now beamed our message into the homes, workplaces, and lives of more than 200,000 people by offering free ringtones of the calls of endangered species such as orcas and wolves at [www.RareEarhtones.org](http://www.RareEarhtones.org).

On [www.BiologicalDiversity.org](http://www.BiologicalDiversity.org), which is becoming a staple resource for climate, endangered species, and science journalists and bloggers as well as the general public, we've published Web-only reports that are exclusive data sources for reporters. In one case, we detailed the management and population history of the bald eagle in each of the lower 48 states — a resource we made available and tailored for local consumption by reporters, with minute-to-minute updates flowing in from biologists. Our live-and-local science reporting event on eagles spawned hundreds of state-specific stories on the eagle's recovery and the success of the Endangered Species Act.

And for two years running we've brought attention to nationally infamous environmental offenders with our Darwin Award-inspired Rubber Dodo Award, given annually to a prominent individual in public or

private service who has done the most to drive endangered species extinct. The first year, we gave the award to Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, whose department did less to protect endangered species than any Interior Department in history. The Rubber Dodo Award took the blogosphere by storm from the first, garnering more than 1,160 blog and Web site postings. In 2008, the anti-prestigious Rubber Dodo went to Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, then the running mate of John McCain in the race for the presidency, for her opposition to protecting polar bears. Palin has since gone on to attack endangered beluga whales in Cook Inlet and gather a war chest of \$6 million to drill a path right through endangered species toward oil and gas, leaving no doubt that the Dodo was richly deserved.



Island fox | *Urocyon littoralis*

*The Center has creatively harnessed the power of media to place endangered plants and animals in the public eye and turn up the political heat to protect them. The Channel Islands fox is just one whose story we've told: In this New York Times front-page article announcing our landmark settlement that forced one of the Bush administration's earliest (and only) moves to protect species, our trademark mapping analysis set the standard for safeguarding 29 species and their habitat.*



## 350 OR BUST

We had intended this space to look forward to the Center's next 20 years. But the world's leading scientists are warning that if we don't get a handle on greenhouse gas emissions in six years, the planet will be committed to catastrophic, runaway global warming. The threat of climate change must be solved now, by us. The problem can't be passed on to our children. If emissions aren't checked by the time today's youth are old enough to make policy, it will be too late for policy.

So instead of 20 years, consider 350 parts per million: We must reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide to fewer than 350 parts per million as swiftly as possible to prevent runaway global warming. This is the task of our generation.

A third of the Earth's species will be committed to extinction by 2050 if we don't take action to get down to 350

now — and that's just the tip of the iceberg. In all of human history — going back more than 200,000 years — the highest CO<sub>2</sub> concentration reached before modern times was 308 ppm. The Earth's atmosphere now has an average concentration of 385. In the geological blink of an eye, we've dumped more CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere than built up naturally in the past 800,000 years.

The current CO<sub>2</sub> level is fundamentally unstable. If we don't get it back down to 350 very soon, we risk creating feedback loops where CO<sub>2</sub> rises higher and higher in a process beyond our control. At 450 ppm, for instance, much of the life in the world's oceans would disappear due to high acidity that would unravel the marine food chains.

China is now the world's largest CO<sub>2</sub> polluter. But on a cumulative and a per capita basis, U.S. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions still dwarf those of other countries.

That means we need to take the lead in getting the world down to 350. To reach that goal, we must rapidly phase out dirty coal-fired power plants, adopt the highest feasible vehicle-mileage standards, enact a moratorium on Arctic oil and gas drilling, and develop large-scale conservation and efficiency programs. It's crucial that the federal government take aggressive regulatory action to reduce emissions now with a clear 350 ppm goal in mind. This will catalyze global action.

We urge you to do all you can to help move the planet toward 350. Conserve energy in your personal life. Contact your representatives in Congress, and on state and local levels, to argue for strict regulatory controls on emissions and urge them to take a stand for 350 ppm. Visit our Web site to find out more: Go to [www.BiologicalDiversity.org](http://www.BiologicalDiversity.org), and type in one word: "solutions."



**Northern flying squirrel** | *Glaucomys sabrinus*  
Climate models project drastic declines in the northern hardwood and red spruce forests that the West Virginia northern flying squirrel calls home. The squirrel is just one of countless species committed to extinction in the near future unless we take action now to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions below 350 parts per million.



# UNSUNG HEROES

Over the years, a great many members have gone the extra mile to put their passion to work for endangered species. Here are some ways they've made their mark.

## CONNIE ECONOMOU

Connie Economou recently unearthed



a letter she wrote, as an eight-year-old growing up in Texas, to the state's wildlife department. The subject of that letter, endangered species, has remained close to her heart ever since. All these years later, the philosophy graduate-turned-teacher for a software company

says it's still a dream to retire and volunteer with the Center.

"It's my favorite conservation organization," she says. "There's a fierce clarity about its mission."

Connie has supported the Center's work for more than 10 years, also choosing to make a lasting gift to future generations by joining our Legacy Circle and including the Center in her will. She sees stemming species loss as one of today's most pressing issues,

fundamentally common to all humans regardless of political boundaries.

"Without the environment, we are nothing," she says. "The priorities should be to protect what's here for our children and children's children."

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**If you'd like to learn more about joining the Center's Legacy Circle and leaving a lasting gift for the planet, contact Jennifer Shepherd at 520.396.1135 or [jshepherd@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:jshepherd@biologicaldiversity.org).**

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## JUDY KAHLE

Judy Kahle, a biologist who teaches her subject to California high school students, includes this among the



lessons: What happens to one group of organisms in an ecosystem affects everything else. Not surprisingly, Judy is passionate about the Center's work to protect life in all its variety.

Judy is a "sustaining member" of the Center, which translates to "unwavering supporter": She's made a gift every month since she joined in 2002. She encourages others who want to make a bigger difference but don't know how they can to consider steadily giving a little for a long time, as she has. We can vouch that it adds up.

Why has Judy chosen to support the Center so loyally, for so long? "A lot of organizations do good work but they're so spread out, spread thin. The Center's work is very focused on endangered species. And your focus is pragmatic: It's the law."

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**Sustaining members make a profound impact for endangered species all year long. It's simple to sign up at [www.BiologicalDiversity.org](http://www.BiologicalDiversity.org), or contact Nicole Silvester at 520.396.1138 or [nsilvester@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:nsilvester@biologicaldiversity.org).**

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## JON SPAR

If Jon Spar hadn't gone to medical school, he would've made conservation his career. But he's also wise to the reality of all world-changing causes: They take money, and lots of it. Years ago, the radiologist decided the most effective way he could help the planet was to make that money – and give it to "smart, passionate people" working for change. He's changed his mind since 10 years ago when he thought he'd go part-time by now because, he says, there's still too much work to be done for him to let up.

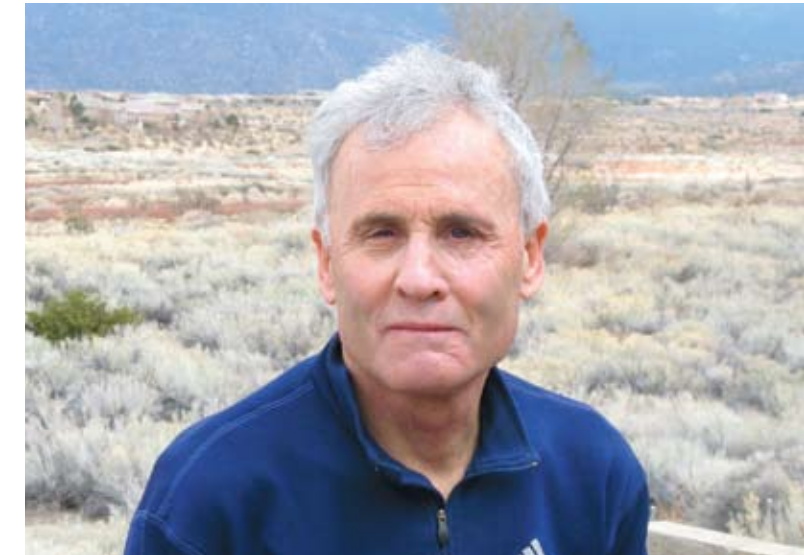
It's the Center's role as an "energetic can-do group" within the environmental movement – its own refusal to let up – that drew him to join the Center in early 2008 and to make increasingly significant gifts since.

Not one to rest on checkbook activism alone, Jon also likes the fact that he can get involved with Center work himself both online and in person. He writes and calls decision-makers whenever he can and sometimes takes days off work to show up and speak at state legislature committee meetings. One animal he's

passionate about speaking out for: the wolf, due to its role as a keystone species at the top of the ecosystems to which it belongs, including the Gila wilderness south of his home in Albuquerque.

Jon walks the walk in the rest of his life as well. Or rather, he bikes – everywhere – and doesn't own a car. Two solar-panel systems on his roof provide heat and electricity, and so many passers-by ask him questions that he regularly gives impromptu 45-minute tours on the house's alternative-energy mechanics.

"Saving the planet is beyond a hobby," he says. "This has to become a whole life issue."



# MEMBERS' INDEX

Our ability to expand the reach of the Center's work over the past 20 years is closely tied to the dynamic growth of our membership. Here's a look at impressive trends in the impact our members have made over time — as well as a few lighter-side statistics. Thank you, members.

Membership count in 1993: **45**

Membership count in 2009: **44,000**

Number of current members in California: **9,704**

Number in Arizona: **3,152**

Number in Wasilla, Alaska: **6**

Dollars raised from members in 1993: **\$2,215**

Dollars raised from members in 2008 (approximate): **\$1,875,000**

Dollars raised in the past two years by kids hosting birthday parties, bake sales, and lemonade stands: **\$1,000**

Number of messages sent from Center supporters to decision-makers through our fledgling online activist network in 2001: **15,000**

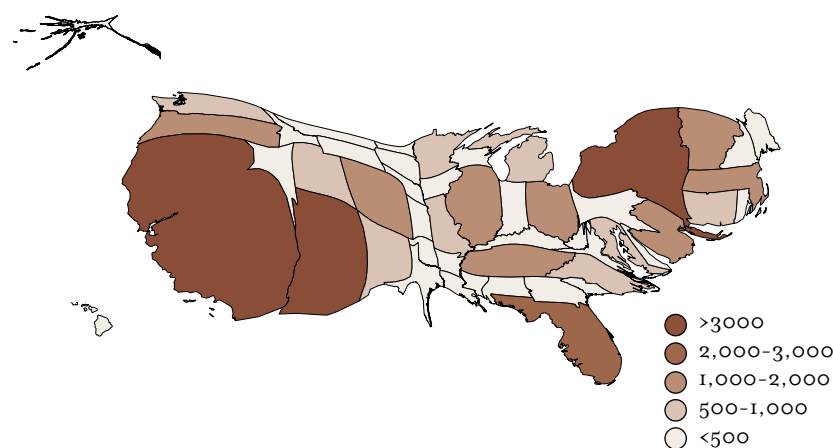
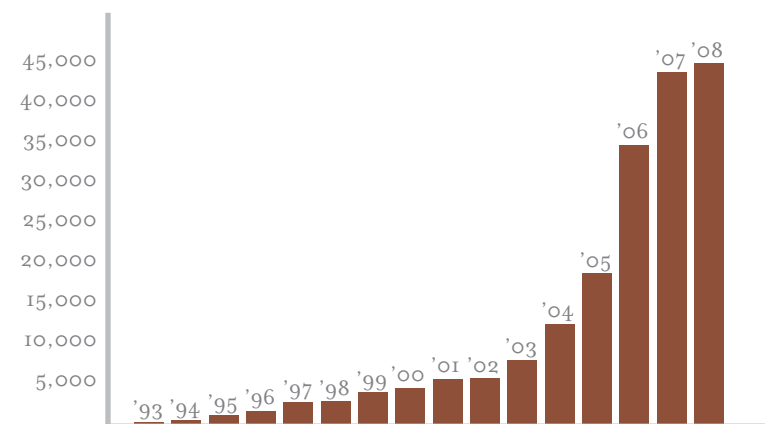
Number sent in 2008: **330,000**

Number of members in our online activist network in 2009: **210,913**

Number of species Center members have helped list under the Endangered Species Act: **363**

Number of those species that are mammals, birds, fish, and plants, respectively: **20, 6, 11, 257**

Number of 2009 members with variations on last name Wolf, Bird, Fish, and Plants, respectively: **45, 32, 49, 14**



## Membership by Year, Membership by State:

*Growth in our membership ranks since 1993 (top) and cartogram showing state size scaled proportionately to number of Center members in each as of early 2009 (bottom)*

Year founded: **1989**

Web site: **www.BiologicalDiversity.org**

Offices: **15 offices in 9 states and the District of Columbia — Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Alaska, Oregon, Illinois, Minnesota, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.**

Staff: **60**

Executive Director: **Kierán Suckling**

Board of Directors: **Marcey Olajos (Chair), Peter Galvin, Katherine A. Meyer, Scott Power, Todd Schulke, Dr. Robin Silver**

*Twenty Years of Saving Species* credits:

Writing: **Lydia Millet**      Concept Design and Editing: **Julie Miller**      Maps: **Curt Bradley and Cassie Holmgren**

Graphic Design: **aire design company**      Species Photography: © **Joel Sartore/joelsartore.com**

## About the Photographer

The endangered species images showcased throughout this publication are the work of *National Geographic* contributing photographer Joel Sartore. In his years on assignment for the magazine, Sartore has focused on the plight of imperiled species and landscapes, including American endangered species, the ivory-billed woodpecker, and Alaska's North Slope. His work has appeared in *Audubon*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* and has been the subject of several national broadcasts including *National Geographic's Explorer*, NPR's *Weekend Edition*, the CBS Sunday Morning Show and a PBS documentary, *At Close Range*. He has also authored the books *Photographing Your Family*, *Face to Face with Grizzlies*, and *Nebraska: Under a Big Red Sky*. We thank Joel for his use of art as advocacy and for contributing to this piece such stunning images of some of the species we've worked to save over our first 20 years.

## On the Cover: **California tiger salamander** | *Ambystoma californiense*

*The California tiger salamander may appear to smile, but like other rapidly declining amphibians around the world it has little reason to. The Center has championed the salamander's cause for nearly a decade, fighting for protections that would protect its increasingly rare wetland habitat from pesticide contamination and development.*





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