

A close-up photograph of a lynx walking through a snowy landscape. The lynx has thick, brown and grey fur and is looking directly at the camera with its characteristic tufted ears. The background is a soft, out-of-focus snow.

# ENDANGERED EARTH

**CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY • WINTER 2024**



# UNRELENTING FOR THE WILD



It's not hard to love wolverines. Fierce, tenacious and known to chase even grizzly bears off a delectable carcass, *Gulo gulo* once roamed across the northern tier of the United States and as far south as New Mexico and Southern California. Trapping and habitat loss, fueled most recently by the climate emergency, drove them out of much of their historic range. Today only about 300 remain in the lower 48 states, mostly in the northern Rockies and parts of Oregon and Washington.

It's been clear for decades that wolverines are in serious trouble. We filed the first petition to protect them under the Endangered Species Act in 1994.

But, as so often happens, the federal government was slow and obstructive and failed for decades to throw these animals a lifeline. The Center and allies spent that time fighting for them in court. And finally, in November — after six rounds of successful litigation — they were protected under the Act. We're hopeful that it's the beginning of a new chapter in their recovery.

It's also an illustration of what's required to do what the Center does. As we enter our 35th year, I'm proud of our record: We've secured protection for more than 750 animals and plants and half a billion acres of habitat.

This year alone we won lifesaving protections for 45 species, including California spotted owls, northwestern and southwestern pond turtles, and cactus ferruginous pygmy owls. We also secured protection for more than 3.8 million acres of critical habitat for wildlife.

But those victories don't come easily. Saving life on Earth requires a relentless insistence that endangered species get the help they need before it's too late. That's why we're built to exert pressure on all fronts: in the courts, in the halls of power, in the streets, and all over the media. We go wherever we're needed, invest in the hardest, longest fights, and don't rest until we know these species are safe.

The alternative is too painful to bear. Twenty-one species were declared officially extinct in the United States last year, including eight types of honeycreeper birds that lived only in Hawai'i. We mourn their loss and turn our heartbreak into determination to save those who are still here.

The coming year will be full of epic fights to save wolves, whales, turtles, birds, plants and more. We're ready to do whatever it takes to ensure a wild future for them all.

I'm deeply grateful for your support of this work. Every win for wildlife happens because you're here with us. *Thank you.*

Kieran Suckling  
Executive Director





# WINS OF 2023

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

- Won lifesaving Endangered Species Act protection for 45 species, including California spotted owls, northwestern and southwestern pond turtles, cactus ferruginous pygmy owls, Cumberland moccasinshell mussels and more.
- Protected 3.8 million acres of critical habitat for 44 species, including nearly 650,000 acres for the rufa red knot shorebird, which has one of the longest migrations of any bird, and 739 acres for the magnificent ramshorn snail in North Carolina.
- Put the eastern hellbender, southern hognose snake, Clear Lake hitch and several other species back on track for endangered species protections denied them by the Trump administration.
- Won a lawsuit forcing Oregon to dramatically expand no-logging buffers along hundreds of miles of rivers and streams on more than half a million acres of forests to protect threatened coho salmon.

## CARNIVORES

- Won big for wolves when a court ruled in our favor, pushing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a national gray wolf recovery plan.
- After years of advocacy, celebrated new wolf packs in California and the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado.
- Defeated an authorization to kill 72 grizzlies in the Yellowstone region and protected lynx from strangulation snares in northeastern Minnesota.
- After nearly two decades of legal work and campaigning, won Endangered Species Act protection for wolverines, whose numbers have fallen to around 300 in the lower 48 states.

## CLIMATE LAW INSTITUTE

- Protected numerous species — including San Joaquin kit foxes, the blunt-nose leopard lizards and Temblor legless lizards — by securing an injunction against oil permitting in California's Kern County.
- Successfully defended Santa Barbara's decision not to allow Exxon to truck in oil and restart offshore oil drilling, which helped protect abalone, California brown pelicans, and southern steelhead trout, as well as beaches and forests.
- Won several lawsuits overturning approvals to restart polluting refineries in California.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Mobilized over 75,000 frontline, Native and climate justice advocates to the March to End Fossil fuels in New York ahead of the United Nations Climate Ambition Summit.
- Filed a landmark lawsuit with a coalition of Indigenous groups, young people and frontline community members against New Mexico for failing to control skyrocketing oil and gas drilling and pollution. Successfully advocated for a ban on new oil and gas leasing on state lands within a mile of schools in New Mexico.



## URBAN WILDLANDS

- Blocked a massive, 8,000-unit development near California's San Jacinto Wildlife Area that would have paved over habitat for sensitive species including burrowing owls, Swainson's hawks, tricolored blackbirds, willow flycatchers and Stephens' kangaroo rats.
- Helped secure permanent protection of Napa County's Walt Ranch, saving thousands of mature oak trees from being cut down to plant vineyards.
- Protected the Kern River from a water diversion project, helping wildlife and supporting the local community, which fought hard to keep the Kern River flowing.

## OCEANS

- Following a major oil spill near Huntington Beach, California, secured a legal agreement for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to review outdated plans for offshore oil platforms to prevent future spills.
- Won a key victory for endangered Pacific humpback whales when a court determined that NOAA Fisheries had neglected to protect these whales from deadly entanglements in sablefish pot gear off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington.
- Protected 6,500 square miles of critical habitat for threatened corals in Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Navassa Island and the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico.

## POPULATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Hosted a first-of-its-kind film and webinar series making the connections between population pressure, environmental health, capitalism, and reproductive health and justice.
- Released an analysis exposing the pervasive use of environmentally harmful fibers among top fashion brands to push the industry toward sustainable practices.
- Conducted groundbreaking research into public perceptions around alternative economies and holiday consumerism to challenge the culture of consumption.

## PUBLIC LANDS

- In a win for mature forests and grizzly bears, halted the Knotty Pine timber sale and defeated the 4,000-acre Black Ram timber sale in Montana's Kootenai National Forest.
- Celebrated designation of the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument in northern Arizona, which will permanently protect nearly 1 million acres of public land surrounding the iconic national park.
- Blocked exploratory drilling in California's Sierra Nevada, reversing approval for a gold-mining project in the Inyo National Forest's Long Valley area.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- In the largest, most ambitious Endangered Species Act pesticide case ever filed against the Environmental Protection Agency, we forced the agency to overhaul its approach and to take major steps to protect every endangered species from pesticides.
- The same legal victory spurred the EPA to advance an ambitious pilot project to protect 29 species most imperiled by pesticides, including the American burying beetle, Poweshiek skipperling, rusty patched bumblebee, Attwater's prairie chicken and Wyoming toad.
- Spearheaded the passage and signing of a bill in California to expand protections from toxic rat poisons, which are harmful and deadly for children, pets and wildlife.

## INTERNATIONAL

- Launched lawsuits and petitions seeking bans on trade in animals threatened by U.S. demand for pets, including lizards and aquarium fish like the Banggai cardinalfish.
- Secured international sanctions against Mexico, under the CITES wildlife treaty, for Mexico's longtime failure to protect gravely imperiled vaquita porpoises.
- Won U.S. government certification that China's trade in imperiled pangolins is a treaty violation, opening the door for economic sanctions.



# OUR 2024 PRIORITIES

Combating the wildlife extinction crisis and the climate emergency — indeed, saving life on Earth — requires us to work on multiple fronts constantly. To be truly effective, we have to win in court, produce groundbreaking science, influence the national narrative, shape politics, and ignite a people-powered movement. So much is riding on this work, including the future of wolves, bears, sea turtles, rare plants, manatees, birds and more. 2024 is shaping up to be a crucial year in the fight for the wild. **Here are our key goals:**

## 1. FULLY ENGAGE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT IN THE FIGHT TO HALT EXTINCTION.

Last year's 50th anniversary of the Act was an important celebration of its success: saving 99% of the animals and plants under its care. If the Act is going to work for the next 50 years — and if it's going to help save the planet's biodiversity — it will need our help. This year we'll be fighting to make sure it's fully funded with an annual budget of at least \$800 million. We'll also be working to reform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries to make sure they're prioritizing the plight of the most endangered species. We'll ward off congressional attacks on this landmark law and, as always, push to make sure that science, not politics, leads the way.

## 2. ADVANCE BOLD CONSERVATION INITIATIVES THAT RESTORE WILDLIFE IN MORE OF THEIR NATIVE HOMELANDS.

Saving life on Earth isn't just about fending off damaging projects and short-term gains. It requires bold, ambitious initiatives that work on a large, ecological scale and produce lasting success for wildlife. For us that means working to restore jaguars in the Southwest, vastly expand grizzly bear habitat, secure recovery for wolverines in the Rockies, get more red wolves into more places in the East, and reintroduce sea otters along the West Coast. These are often difficult, long-term projects that not only require imaginative vision but also the discipline, drive and creativity to see them to fruition.

## 3. HOLD THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ACCOUNTABLE TO END FOSSIL FUELS.

The climate emergency is manifesting itself in deeply troubling ways, including deadly heat waves, floods and extreme weather events — and yet the Biden administration continues to ramp up oil and gas leasing. Hundreds of thousands of people around the globe last year called for an end to fossil fuels, and we'll continue to build on that powerful momentum. While we fight harmful projects like the Willow development in the Arctic, we'll push Biden to reverse course and use his executive powers to finally move us in the right direction: ending fossil fuels and fostering a just and rapid transition to a safer, healthier climate for all.

## 4. PROTECT LANDS, WATERS AND ECOSYSTEMS VITAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE WILD.

Stemming the wildlife extinction crisis means protecting the most important habitat for endangered species. Sometimes that only requires protecting a few miles of a river for a rare freshwater mussel. Other times it's about safeguarding hundreds of miles of land or water. Whatever the case, our work will focus on protecting the oceans, rivers, deserts, mountains, plains and forests that enable plants and animals to survive. In particular we'll be focusing on defending habitat for rare and neglected species — those that may not get much time in the spotlight but are still critical to their ecosystems and have an inalienable right to exist.

## 5. WORK AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY, HALT PLASTIC POLLUTION, AND STEM THE CLIMATE CRISIS.

The extinction crisis and the climate emergency transcend national boundaries, so it's critical that we work internationally, joining forces with allies to push global leaders in a better direction. We need to make sure all countries fully protect biodiversity and abide by international wildlife treaties that curb exploitation, protect ecologically important landscapes, and prioritize endangered species. We'll also continue to be a voice at international conferences advocating for a global end to fossil fuels and a binding agreement to reduce plastics.



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## ENDANGERED EARTH

is the membership newsletter of the Center for Biological Diversity. With the support of more than 1.7 million members and supporters, the Center works through science, law and creative media to secure a future for all species, great and small, hovering on the brink of extinction. *Endangered Earth* is published three times yearly, in January, July and October.

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