



Support Protection of Endangered Species, Wildlife, and their Habitat

Arizona's animals and plants need your help! A total of 55 federally listed endangered or threatened species – 38 animals and 17 plants – call our state home, making Arizona one of the top 10 states with regards to the number of species on the path to extinction. As habitat is degraded or destroyed via development, roads, water diversions, overgrazing of livestock, and agriculture, among other things, many species are negatively affected and their populations decline.

To begin to address this issue, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. The intent of this act is “to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved” and “to provide a program for the conservation of [such] species.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is responsible for the protection and recovery of these threatened and endangered species.

While the ESA provides a lifeline for species, without a concerted effort to protect habitat and to eliminate the factors that promote species endangerment, these plants and animals are destined to have a precarious future, and many will face extinction.

building, water diversions, and groundwater pumping. To truly recover Arizona's native fish, we need to eliminate and mitigate many of these factors.



Recovering a species after it has been extirpated from its home habitat is a very difficult prospect and may prove impossible for some species. A prime example of how problematic such recovery can be is the Mexican gray wolf. Recovery efforts for this species have shown that

human inflexibility and intolerance, in addition to the lack of full ESA protection provided by the species' experimental, nonessential designation, could mean this animal's future consists of a modified zoo existence at best. A concerted effort by all of us, including biologists who know the problems with the program, is necessary to ensure the wolves have the space, habitat, and protection needed for recovery. Similar commitment is needed for other species as well.

The government's excessive foot-dragging in listing species and protecting habitat has provoked much litigation. Currently, the Bush administration is predominantly ignoring listing species and their habitats and is instead keeping them in limbo, ultimately contributing to their demise.

In Arizona, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) is the lead wildlife agency, although the USFWS provides leadership for all activities regarding threatened and endangered species. The AGFD is governed by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, an entity consisting of gubernatorial appointees who serve five-year rotating terms



For example, of the 36 fish species native to Arizona, one is officially extinct, at least one has been extirpated from Arizona, and 20 are listed as threatened or endangered, including the Apache trout, spikedace, razorback sucker, and desert pupfish, among others. Threats to these fish include grazing in riparian zones along rivers and streams, introduction and stocking of non-native fish and other species like crayfish, deforestation, road





various species, although this is not always the case.

after confirmation by the Arizona Senate. Ideally, Commissioners should have knowledge of wildlife and issues affecting the

Our wildlife agencies need to act more aggressively to protect wildlife by ensuring stronger habitat protection. Arizona's native species are crucial for the effective long-term functioning of ecological systems and landscapes, and we must do everything in our power to protect them and the ecosystems on which they depend.

The Sierra Club is working with other organizations to protect species and their habitat to ensure that sustainable populations of Arizona's wildlife are here for future generations.

In order to accomplish this, we must do the following:

- **Aggressively acquire and protect habitat for all native species.**
- **Support programs to recover extirpated species such as the Mexican gray wolf, black-tailed prairie dog, and California condor.**
- **Take action to restore and protect Arizona's diverse ecosystems, including grasslands that are critically important to pronghorn, prairie dogs, and grassland birds and our remaining old-growth forests that house the northern goshawk and Kaibab squirrel.**
- **Support strong programs to protect our rivers and recover Arizona's native fish populations.**
- **Focus resources on maintaining healthy populations of native wildlife.**

What You Can Do

You can assist the Sierra Club's wildlife programs by participating in service trips to rehabilitate habitat or monitor species. Opportunities include helping black-footed ferrets, native fish, Sonoran desert tortoises, Mexican gray wolves, and many others. We welcome you to attend Game and Fish Commission meetings and communicate with them about wildlife issues. Letters to the editor in support of Arizona's wildlife are also helpful. Another important way you can help Arizona's wildlife is by joining the Grand Canyon Chapter's Wildlife Committee, in which you can learn more about Arizona's wildlife, the threats and conflicts they face, and what we can all do to help.



Drawing: Robert Savannah, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

For more information on our wildlife activities, please contact Halina Szyposzynski at halina@amerion.com or Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org or (602) 253-8633 & visit our website at www.arizona.sierraclub.org.



For up-to-date species information, refer to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov) or the Arizona Game and Fish Department (www.azgfd.gov).