



White House, July 1999

“The return of the bald eagle is a fitting cap to a century of environmental stewardship...Extinction is not an option — not for the eagle, not for other creatures put here by God.”

*President Bill Clinton
July 2, 1999*

Protecting Our Precious Wildlife

When our Founders selected the American bald eagle as our national symbol, as many as half a million of these majestic birds soared the skies of North America. By the early 1960's, a mere 400 breeding pairs survived in the lower 48 states.

Today, the bald eagle is back. In ceremonies last summer on the South Lawn of the White House, President Clinton announced the first step in formally removing the eagle from the endangered species list. The dramatic comeback of the eagle, the American alligator, the gray whale and others is testament to the success of the Endangered Species Act, and to America's determination to protect and restore our native wildlife.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore have strengthened these efforts by creating and expanding national wildlife refuges, and by committing more resources to protecting wildlife on other federal lands. But the survival of many species depends more on the health of America's private lands. That is why the Administration has worked so hard to forge partnerships with landowners, pioneering innovative approaches that provide them the flexibility and certainty they need to make productive use of their lands, while ensuring that America's wild plants and animals can flourish.



Restoring Threatened and Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act, one of America's landmark environmental laws, is our last line of defense against species extinction. Its goal is no less than the preservation of our nation's biodiversity. Although the number of species listed under the Act as threatened or endangered continues to rise, the Clinton-Gore Administration has made significant strides in more quickly assessing the status of individual species and developing plans for their recovery.

Perhaps the greatest measure of the Act's success is the growing number of species once declared threatened or endangered that are no longer in danger of extinction. Since 1978, 35 species have recovered sufficiently to be "downlisted" from endangered to threatened or removed from the list entirely — 15 in the last seven years. The Administration has proposed "downlisting" or "delisting" another 12 species. In addition to the bald eagle, notable successes include:

American Peregrine Falcon. Thirty years ago, only 324 nesting pairs survived. Thanks to the banning of DDT, captive breeding, reintroduction efforts, and the protection of nest sites — the same kinds of efforts that brought back the bald eagle — there are now 1,650 breeding pairs. The falcon came off the endangered species list last year.

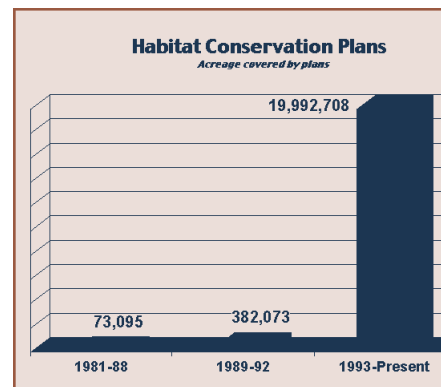
The Aleutian Canada Goose. With populations up from only a few hundred in the mid-1970s to about 32,000 birds today, final action to remove the bird from the endangered species list could come later this year.

Tinian Monarch. A small flycatcher found only on the island of Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands, this bird has expanded its population from 50 or fewer after World War II to approximately 57,000 today. Its "delisting" is pending.

Forging Partnerships to Protect Habitat

Seventy percent of the United States outside Alaska is in private hands, so successful efforts to maintain and restore the nation's wildlife must include landowners. The Clinton-Gore Administration has pioneered the use of collaborative approaches under the Endangered Species Act to help balance habitat preservation with economic development.

One of the most valuable tools is the habitat conservation plan — a voluntary long-term agreement between the government and a landowner that helps ensure survival of threatened and endangered species while allowing productive use of the land. Prior to 1993, only 14 such plans existed. The Administration has since forged another 246 plans protecting more than 20 million acres and 200 threatened and endangered species. Other reforms undertaken by the Administration to protect habitat while permitting property owners flexibility in managing their land include "safe harbor" and "candidate conservation" agreements.



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bainbridge, Georgia Protecting Jobs and Wildlife In the Woods

Thanks to a groundbreaking wildlife partnership, the nation's largest private landowner can continue producing jobs and timber in the pine forests of the Southeastern U.S., and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker stands a much better chance of survival.

Working with the Fish and Wildlife Service, environmentalists, and the state of Georgia, the International Paper Company developed the first habitat conservation plan ever that committed to increasing and improving endangered species habitat on private lands, rather than simply maintaining or relocating existing populations.

Habitat conservation planning is a flexible approach under the Endangered Species Act that helps ensure a species' survival while allowing landowners greater certainty in managing their lands. International Paper's plan is improving habitat across 5,300 acres — creating artificial nesting cavities and new foraging areas — with a goal of significantly increasing the number of woodpeckers on its lands.

"We have been able to continue to harvest timber in this area because the red-cockaded woodpecker prefers an open territory with low tree density," said Sharon Haines, a sustainable forestry manager at International Paper. "It struck a very good balance between economic viability and species protection."

Environmentalists also are pleased. "This plan demonstrates that it is possible to find common ground where both endangered species and landowners can prosper," said Michael Bean of Environmental Defense, which helped craft the plan.

Returning Wolves to Yellowstone

One of the most dramatic stories of species recovery in the United States is the return of the gray wolf to Yellowstone National Park. Once widely viewed as a threat to humans and livestock, wolves were hunted nearly to extinction by the mid-1900's. In 1995, the Administration began a program to reintroduce wolves to Yellowstone, where they were long an integral part of the ecosystem, helping to maintain stable, healthy populations of elk and other large prey. The reintroduced population of 10 has now grown to nearly 120, including eight breeding pairs. A similar program begun in 1998 is now reintroducing the Mexican gray wolf to Arizona and New Mexico.

Saving Salmon in the Pacific Northwest

Salmon have long been integral to the culture and economy of the Pacific Northwest, but the prodigious runs that once filled the region's rivers have declined dramatically over the past century. The Administration is working closely with state, tribal, and local leaders on plans to restore salmon in coastal rivers and in the Columbia-Snake River basin. The goal is a long-term strategy, built on sound science and strong regional consensus, that ensures the health of both the region's economy and its environment.

The successful negotiation last year of a new Pacific Salmon Treaty with Canada will help achieve this goal through expanded scientific cooperation, habitat restoration, and new controls over salmon harvest in U.S. and Canadian waters. In this year's budget, President Clinton secured \$25 million to begin implementing the treaty, and \$58 million for a new Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, which provides resources for states and tribes to protect and rebuild coastal salmon stocks. For the coming year, the President is proposing \$100 million for the coastal salmon fund, and \$190 million for other salmon recovery efforts in the Pacific Northwest.

Strengthening Our Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's oldest and largest network of lands dedicated to conserving fish and wildlife. To ensure that these lands are well protected, the Administration has increased funding for the refuge system by about 75 percent since 1993. Twenty-three new refuges have been created, and several others expanded, for a total of 521 refuges encompassing more than 93 million acres in all. These efforts include:

- Creation of the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in West Virginia, the nation's 500th refuge;
- A significant expansion of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, using funds from a court settlement arising from the Exxon Valdez oil spill, and;
- Transfer of management of 57,000 acres adjoining the Washington's Hanford Reach to the refuge system, protecting critical salmon habitat in the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River between the Canadian border and the Pacific Ocean.

Guarding Against Invasive Species

One of the most pervasive but least recognized threats to America's native flora and fauna is the spread of invasive non-native species. They represent a serious economic threat as well, costing the U.S. economy an estimated \$122 billion a year. Examples include the zebra mussel, which has shut down utilities in the Great Lakes by clogging water intake pipes; the leafy spurge, a weed that crowds out native grasses on Western ranchlands; the brown tree snake, which threatens entire bird species on Guam; and the Asian long-horned beetle, which has forced the removal of thousands of trees in Brooklyn and Chicago.

To address this threat, the President issued an Executive Order last year establishing an interagency Invasive Species Council to coordinate federal efforts. The council is developing a comprehensive plan to prevent the introduction of non-native species and to control those already here. Other recent efforts include a ban on the import of untreated wood packing material from China, the source of the Asian long-horned beetle infestation.



NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center

Petaluma, California In a Creek Reborn, The Steelhead Are Back

Adobe Creek was once the major source of drinking water for Petaluma Valley, north of San Francisco, and alive with salmon and steelhead trout. But after years of pollution and neglect, state officials declared it "dead."

Then along came Tom Furrer and his Anglers.

Furrer, an environmental science teacher at Petaluma's Casa Grande High School, decided it was time Adobe Creek was brought back to life. He formed a student group, the United Anglers of Casa Grande, which cleared debris from the dry creek bed, planted thousands of trees along its banks, and spearheaded a successful drive to restore flows that had been diverted. The Anglers also raised funds to build a state-of-the-art fish hatchery

The group faced one last obstacle: a 12-foot culvert that made it impossible for fish to get upstream to spawn. They contacted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which provided funding and engineering expertise to construct a fish ladder so that fish can get past the culvert and swim upstream.

In 1998, native steelhead were able to reach historic spawning grounds for the first time in over half a century. "To see this project actually come to completion is absolutely thrilling," said Furrer. "After years of hard work by hundreds of students, supported by NOAA and the community, steelhead can reclaim the habitat that was once theirs decades ago."

The Anglers will continue maintaining the fish ladder and monitoring the creek to ensure it remains healthy and alive.