



Help Protect Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Arizona's animals and plants need your help! A total of 62 federally listed endangered or threatened species – 45 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, livestock overgrazing, and agriculture, among other things, species are negatively affected and 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 ensure resiliency 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. Climate change is a huge factor contributing to species endangerment.

deforestation, road 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 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, as well as its failure to address climate change, has provoked much litigation. Over 100 species have been on the ESA waiting list for at least 10 years, and over 70 more have been waiting for more than 25 years.

The U.S. government's policy to deter human movement across the U.S./Mexico border has also had enormous impacts on wildlife. Current border policy relies on the construction of walls through sensitive lands that are home to a wide range of species. These walls split ecosystems in two, disrupt natural wildlife migration, and affect the flow of surface waters. Walls



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. Another three species are candidates to be formally listed as threatened or endangered. 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,





continue to be constructed along the border in Arizona, California, and Texas. Their construction is in direct conflict with environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act.

Wildlife refuges in Arizona, such as Buenos Aires and Cabeza Prieta, have been significantly affected by border activities. Walls have also harmed the San Pedro National Conservation Area and the species that rely on it. Rare and unique species such as the Sonoran pronghorn, jaguar, ocelot, and many others that inhabit the border region are threatened by these actions.

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. This includes seeking better policies on the federal, state, and local level and focusing on large habitat areas across the state.

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

- **Aggressively acquire and protect habitat for all native species.**
- **Support programs to recover once 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.**
- **Pursue repeal of policies that promote destruction of our borderlands and sensitive wildlife habitat.**
- **Support strong programs to protect our rivers and recover Arizona's native fish populations.**
- **Work to limit climate change and ensure habitat resiliency.**

What You Can Do

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 Arizona 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. Sign up to learn more about Arizona's wildlife, find out more about our Border Protection and Restoration Campaign, and help protect lands in the Greater Grand Canyon Area.



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

For more information, please contact our Chapter Director Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org or (602) 253-8633 & visit our website at <http://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).