



DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

2013-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN





DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Our Wildlife Heritage

North America is fortunate to have some of the most abundant and diverse wildlife and natural resources on Earth. From the wetlands of Florida to the frozen tundras of Alaska, from the arid deserts of Mexico and the Southwest to the lush forests of the Pacific Northwest, our continent is home to a richness of wildlife and special places. More than 200,000 known species exist in the United States alone, species as varied as the landscapes they depend on for survival. Polar bears, wolves, condors, sea turtles and freshwater mussels—all are part of our impressive wildlife heritage, an inheritance admired around the world.

A great stewardship responsibility comes along with this abundance of natural riches. Americans have repeatedly risen to the challenge of fulfilling it, establishing a proud wildlife legacy in the process. We were the first country in the world to create national parks and a national system of wildlife refuges. We pioneered environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, to protect our native plants and animals and their habitat base. Other countries have modeled their conservation

laws on ours; none has surpassed them. For generations, we have recognized our moral duty to conserve and protect the diversity of wildlife and special places that make our country unique. This is part of what makes us proud to be Americans and prouder still to pass these great treasures to the next generation. But this legacy is in danger.

Habitat loss and fragmentation, population growth, resource extraction, invasive species and disease are contributing to a loss of species so rapid that scientists say we are now living through the sixth great extinction. In the United States alone, many species are at risk; more than 500 are believed to be extinct already. Narrow-minded and outdated policies are undermining accomplishments like the re-establishment of top predators on landscapes they once roamed freely. And new threats to biodiversity such as climate change are evolving rapidly. Scientists agree that rising temperatures will have a pervasive impact on wildlife but cannot predict exactly what it will be. Confronted with uncertainty, how should policymakers and land managers respond?

These threats impact not only our wildlife but our lands and our people. The decline in bees, bats and other pollinators, for example, is starting to affect our crops and food supply. Because we rely on nature as much as nature relies on us, a balanced and healthy environment is critical to our own survival.

Adding to the challenges we face is a slow but steady shift in public priorities. Although people still value environmental protection, their focus recently has centered on issues such as the economy, jobs, the deficit, terrorism and education. Given this social trend, who will remain a strong voice and advocate for wildlife?

Our children and those who follow deserve to see our diverse wildlife in its native environments and to enjoy North America's spectacular wild places. These are sights to be experienced firsthand, not through picture books and old movies.

Our children and those who follow deserve to see our diverse wildlife in its native habitats and to enjoy North America's spectacular wild places. These are sights to be experienced firsthand, not through picture books and old movies.

—Jamie Rappaport Clark, President and CEO

Defenders' Role

Defenders of Wildlife is a major national conservation organization focused solely on wildlife and habitat conservation and the safeguarding of biodiversity. We believe in the inherent value of wildlife and the natural world, whether it is bald eagles prized for their grace and beauty or honey bees valued for their role in producing our food. This singular focus defines our important niche in the environmental and conservation community. It serves as the anchor for our organizational values and the touchstone for the commitments we make to each other, our supporters and North America's wildlife.

Defenders' approach is direct and straightforward: We protect and restore imperiled species throughout North America by transforming policies and institutions and promoting innovative solutions. We speak with one voice informed by scientific, legal and policy expertise, hands-on wildlife management experience and effective advocacy. This enables us to "punch above our weight" and puts Defenders at the forefront of

developing enduring solutions to our wildlife conservation challenges. By aligning Defenders around our integrated and focused strategy, we believe that we can make a lasting difference for wildlife and its habitat during these uniquely challenging times.

In this dynamic operating environment, we have developed distinctive strengths to advance our mission. We are widely recognized by our peers and policymakers for the effectiveness of our advocacy work, particularly with the Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture. We are known for being the most effective advocate for wildlife funding in the federal appropriations process and for the political activism of the Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund. Our field offices enhance our credibility as a national organization that can deliver on-the-ground conservation at the local level. And our grassroots organizing strength compels action on behalf of a population segment that cannot act for itself, North America's wildlife.



CALIFORNIA CONDOR COURTESY U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



HUMPBACK WHALE © WILLIAM WELCH

Defenders' Strategic Plan

Defenders of Wildlife's 2013-2023 strategic plan articulates a common purpose and direction for the organization. Grounded in the conviction that our wildlife conservation mission is urgent and important, the plan provides a framework for setting goals and allocating resources across Defenders. It includes the following elements:

- **Mission Statement:** The purpose/aspiration of Defenders of Wildlife
- **Values Statement:** Who we are and how we operate
- **Conservation Vision:** What success looks like over the long term
- **Conservation Approach:** How we get results—our model for impact
- **Value Proposition:** Why donors should support us
- **25-year Unifying Conservation Goal:** Our common objectives, expressed in terms of outcomes, not activities
- **10-year Conservation Benchmarks:** Measurable targets that contribute directly to our unifying conservation goal
- **Priority Strategies:** How we will focus our work organization-wide to meet our benchmarks

By aligning Defenders' many institutional strengths within this integrated framework, we believe we can make a lasting difference for wildlife and have an impact that belies our size. If we speak with one voice, our blend of policy expertise, field credibility, grassroots and grassroots advocacy outreach, science and strategic litigation enables us to have a disproportionate impact relative to resources expended. We owe nothing less to our members, donors and other supporters.



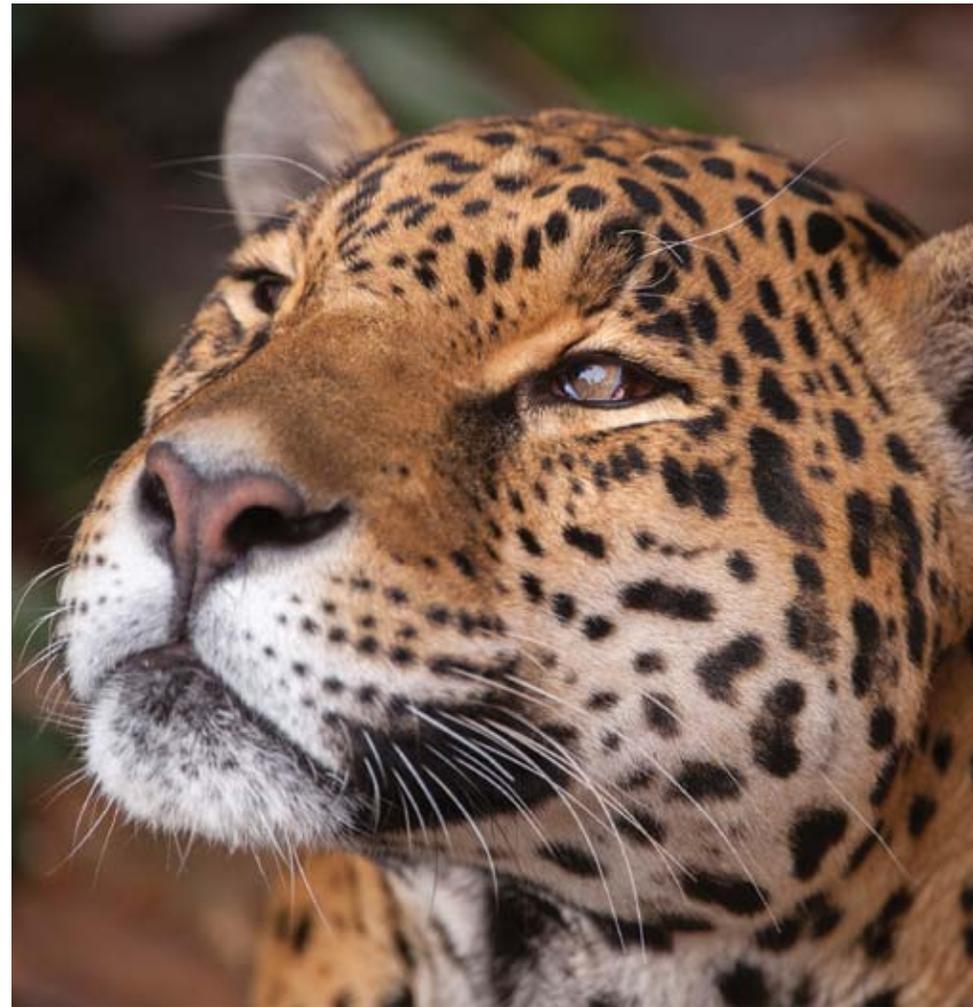


RED KNOTS, DUNLIN, SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS AND SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS IN DELAWARE BAY
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MISSION STATEMENT

Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities.

Our mission statement serves as the point of departure for our strategic plan, articulating our aspirations to protect the full range of North American biodiversity—fauna, flora and natural communities—and acknowledging our roots as a membership organization.



JAGUAR © JOEL SARTORE/WWW.JOELSARTORE.COM

VALUES STATEMENT

Defenders of Wildlife believes in the inherent value of wildlife and the natural world, regardless of whether individual species are recognized as having utilitarian or aesthetic value to humankind. We believe that we will better achieve our mission to conserve all native plants and animals in North America in their natural communities if we live by convictions that guide all aspects of our work. Defenders' values statement sets out expectations as to how employees will interact with each other, guides relationships with partners and supporters, and shapes interactions with those holding differing opinions and beliefs.

We are “One Defenders,” committed to working together under the highest standards of honesty and integrity to achieve transformative goals for our members, supporters and the plant and animal resources we seek to conserve. We strive to:

- Always use the best available science to inform and guide our decisions and priorities, but recognize that it may not always be the sole driver of our actions.
- Balance idealism with pragmatism, focusing on creating solutions rather than just identifying problems.
- Be fair, honest, open-minded, collaborative and respectful in all our internal and external interactions.
- Be truthful and accurate in our internal and external communications, acknowledging and rectifying our errors when we make them.
- Regardless of political affiliation, collaborate with others who share our commitment to wildlife conservation and challenge those who violate or seek to weaken our nation's environmental laws.
- Measure our performance by the achievement of lasting solutions consistent with our mission, long-term goals and priorities.
- Value and respect the critical contributions of our members and supporters.
- Use our resources wisely, thinking big and maximizing the impact and effectiveness of our advocacy work.



- Value innovation, being willing to take responsible risks to advance wildlife conservation.
- Minimize our own impact on wildlife and the environment by conserving resources in our daily work.
- Routinely assess both our successes and our disappointments, learning from those experiences and adapting our strategies and tactics as necessary.

Our employees are our greatest asset; we care about their welfare and professional growth—and will always listen to our coworkers' suggestions for improving our operations. We foster empowerment at all levels of our organization through clarity of authority and accountability. We value the unique perspectives and backgrounds of our employees and work to expand the diversity of our workforce, board of directors and coalitions. Moreover, we recognize that conservation of biological diversity is best advanced by the contributions of people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and cultures.

This values statement sets the tone for who we are and how we operate. It emphasizes our commitment to being constructive, fair, straightforward and truthful as we seek long-term, science-based solutions to complex wildlife and habitat issues.



CONSERVATION VISION

Diverse wildlife populations in North America are secure and thriving, sustained by a network of healthy lands and waters.

Fifty years from now, what outcomes will indicate tangible progress toward our mission? What does success look like for Defenders? Our conservation vision succinctly describes the elements that define our success:

- **Diverse populations.** Our conservation efforts are targeted at the full range of vulnerable North American biodiversity, from plants to pollinators to predators. We recognize that we cannot protect any species without simultaneously protecting the diversity of habitats and wildlife on which it relies.
- **North America.** While we do not set geographic boundaries on our work, we primarily focus on species of North America, including transboundary terrestrial and marine species that migrate through its waters.
- **Secure and thriving.** We are working for the day when vulnerable North American species rebound to the point that they are secure—no longer threatened with rapid decline or extinction—and thriving in robust, well-distributed populations.
- **Network of healthy lands and waters.** Wildlife has the greatest chance of being secure and thriving if it is supported by a transnational network of public and private lands, rivers and coastal waters, core natural areas and working landscapes.

CONSERVATION APPROACH

To help realize our conservation vision, Defenders of Wildlife focuses on three imperatives:

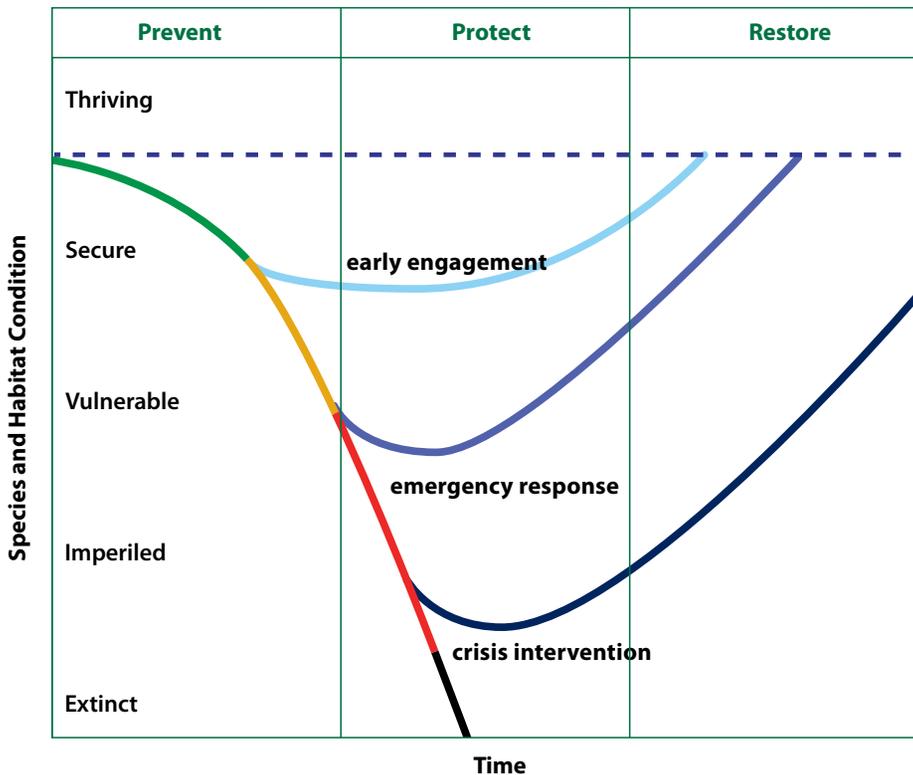
- Prevent species and their habitats from becoming imperiled.
- Protect endangered and threatened species and their habitats.
- Restore the health of once-vulnerable species and their habitats.

This overarching approach is best thought of as a continuum. It summarizes how we work to abate threats to biodiversity and get measurable results. The three imperatives are grounded in the principles of conservation biology and provide a common theme for Defenders’ programs and campaigns.

As illustrated below, this conservation approach covers a wide range in the status and needs of wildlife and its habitat. The dotted line represents

our vision of species and habitat condition: secure and thriving wildlife populations sustained by a network of healthy lands and waters. The plummeting line represents what happens without any intervention. The three blue curves demonstrate the difference we can make by taking preventive, protective and restorative measures depending on where we step in along the downward curve. With early intervention at the point at which resource health is just starting to show signs of dipping below secure levels, we can prevent further decline and restore resource health quickly (light blue line). If we wait until the status drops to vulnerable and an emergency response is required, resource health is regained more slowly (medium blue line). And if we do not act until species are imperiled and heading toward extinction and habitat is seriously damaged and disappearing—the crisis intervention stage (dark blue line)—recovery will be even slower and may never progress to security.

CONSERVATION APPROACH



GOPHER TORTOISE © JOEL SARTORE/WWW.JOELSARTORE.COM

VALUE PROPOSITION

Defenders of Wildlife protects and restores imperiled species by transforming policies and institutions and promoting innovative solutions needed to conserve wildlife and habitat.

Our value proposition answers the question, “Why Defenders?” Why should a potential donor or partner invest in Defenders or a policymaker take our advice? What do we deliver that distinguishes us from other environmental/conservation organizations?

First, with our emphasis on “imperiled species”—our most vulnerable plants and animals—and their habitat, we are focused on biodiversity conservation, a focus abandoned in some measure by other conservation organizations. At a time when the growing trend is to accept the inevitability of development and move toward more human-centric conservation, we are doubling down on wildlife protection.

Second, we are dedicated to “transforming policies and institutions,” an emphasis that highlights our strengths as an organization. We are pragmatic, solutions-oriented, passionate advocates for wildlife that seek to change the behavior of Congress, government agencies and other public and private institutions involved in wildlife conservation.



25-YEAR UNIFYING CONSERVATION GOAL

Seventy-five percent of North America’s once-vulnerable wildlife species are now secure.

This ambitious but achievable goal sets forth what Defenders of Wildlife intends to accomplish for wildlife conservation over the next 25 years. It is a definition of success predicated on the core of what we do: Promote the conservation and restoration of North America’s vulnerable species. All of Defenders’ work over the next 25 years will contribute to the achievement of this goal, whether it involves habitat preservation and restoration, securing greater wildlife conservation funding or defending and strengthening vital wildlife and land management laws and policies.



FRESHWATER MUSSELS © JOEL SARTORE/WWW.JOELSARTORE.COM



10-YEAR CONSERVATION BENCHMARKS

- **Endangered Species Act: More than half of the species currently listed are stable or improving.**
- **Key species: 25 vulnerable species are secure in important ecosystems and focal landscapes.**
- **Federal and nonfederal habitat: Double the acreage of high-priority wildlife habitat that is managed for ecological integrity.**

Our 10-year benchmarks build on areas of core strength and focus at Defenders. We have been heavily involved in the implementation of the Endangered Species Act since its enactment in 1973. We are the leading conservation voice in the defense of the act and for the adoption of innovative policy improvements that will accelerate the recovery of imperiled species.

Defenders has also been extremely effective in generating public support for the conservation of high-profile imperiled species such as wolves, manatees, sea otters, bison and grizzly bears. Using these key species as “ambassadors,” we tell a broader conservation story that includes the integral role of less charismatic

CALIFORNIA SEA OTTER © JOE TOMOLEONI



wildlife. Over the next 10 years, we plan to use some lesser known but equally key imperiled species, such as pollinators, freshwater mussels and amphibians, as key ambassadors of ecosystem health and environmental quality to educate the public on the value of all species of biodiversity and to build support for restoring these equally key species to their historic functional ecological roles in focal landscapes. (See the map of our focal landscapes, opposite, and the complete list of our key species below.)

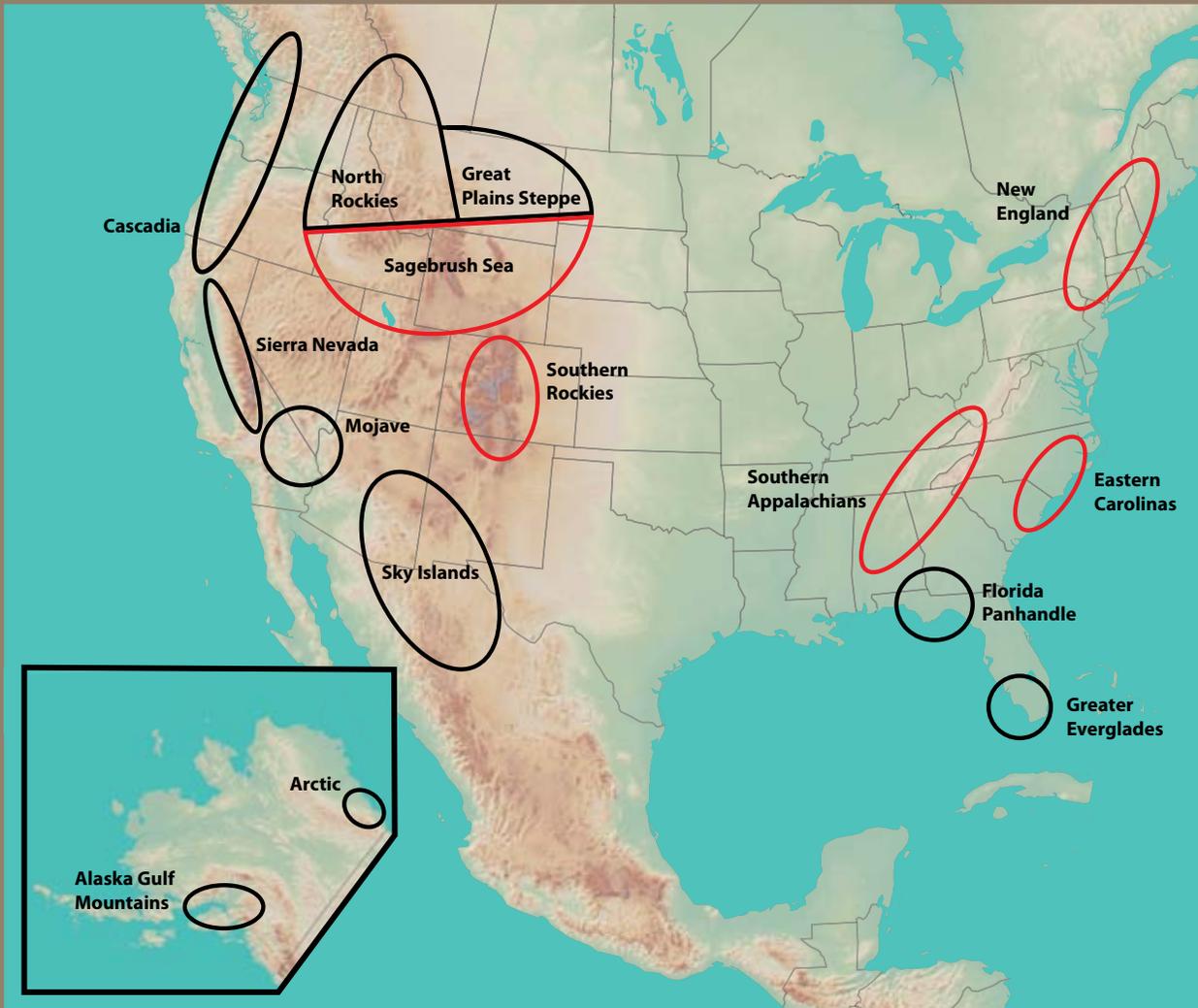
Finally, Defenders recognizes that the greatest opportunity for maximizing conservation security for the broadest array of vulnerable species is to double the amount of priority wildlife habitat managed to maintain or restore ecological integrity. Just as a rising tide raises all boats, maintaining and restoring ecological integrity of our land base benefits all species.

KEY SPECIES

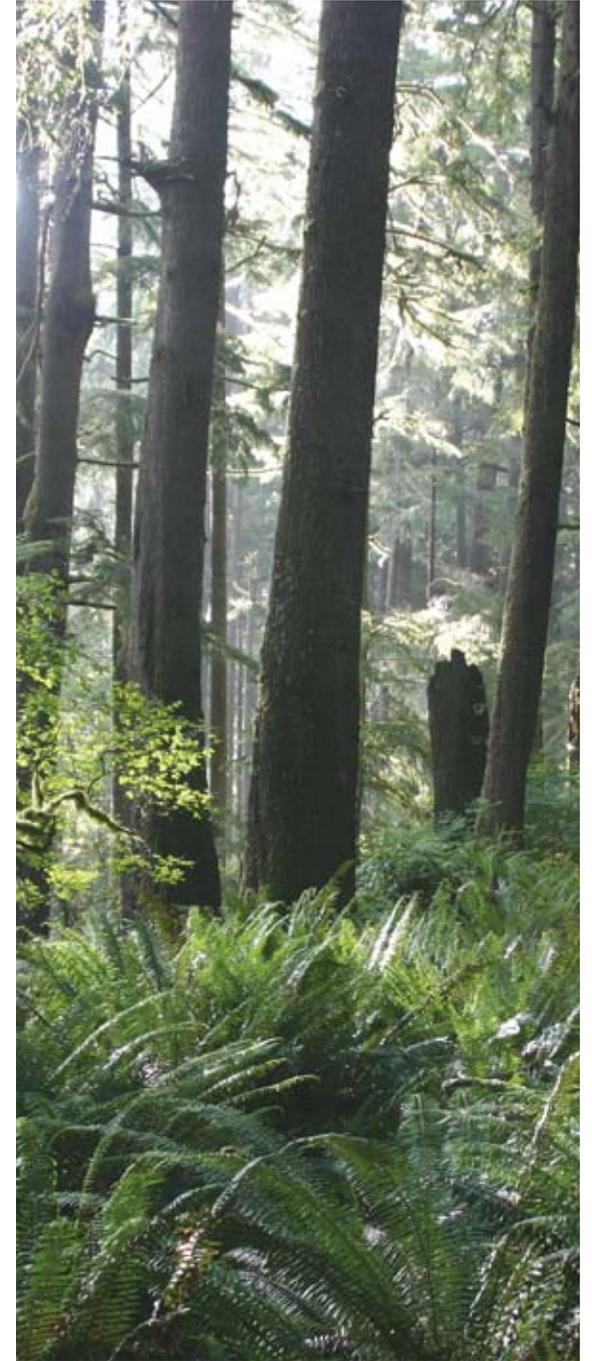
WOLVES	AMPHIBIANS
BEES	WHALES
BATS	MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS
SEA TURTLES	JAGUAR
SONORAN PRONGHORN	BISON
SHARKS	FRESHWATER FISHES
MUSSELS	SEA OTTER
BLACK-FOOTED FERRET	FLORIDA PANTHER
DESERT TORTOISE	MANATEE
GRIZZLY BEAR	POLAR BEAR
PARROTS	CALIFORNIA CONDOR
WOLVERINE	SAGE GROUSE
GOPHER TORTOISE	

To arrive at this list of key species, Defenders' staff and science advisors conducted an evaluation based on the following questions: Does the species or group of species have a disproportionately large effect on the natural environment relative to its abundance? Play a functional role within its ecosystem and/or serve as an indicator for the health and integrity of the larger ecosystem of which it is part? Face a significant threat? Have realistic odds of making meaningful conservation progress? Does Defenders have the specific expertise to work on it? Can we make a unique contribution to its conservation? Does the list reflect North America's rich diversity of species and habitats?

FOCAL LANDSCAPES



Focal landscapes are areas that offer important opportunities to maintain/restore ecological integrity on priority habitats, stabilize or improve the status of key species or address Defenders' conservation program priorities, test conservation approaches and management techniques and maximize our impact by collaborating with federal and state resource agencies, local organizations and landowners. It includes areas where we currently have field capacity and expertise (outlined in black) and priority areas for expansion (outlined in red).



PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Defenders intends to achieve its 10-year benchmarks and unifying conservation goal by concentrating on seven core strategies:

1. Secure new administrative initiatives, policies and laws.

Defenders will provide the intellectual capital for innovative ideas and solutions for enhancing the conservation of vulnerable species and their habitat. We will also focus on developing new initiatives for dramatically expanding the amount of high-priority wildlife habitat managed for ecological integrity.

2. Support progressive state policies and programs.

Success in stabilizing many vulnerable or declining species is significantly influenced by the quality and conservation focus of underlying state laws. We will continue to be heavily involved in federal wildlife policy work, but will also foster and support progressive state efforts and act strategically to oppose and attempt to reform state laws, policies and programs that impede species recovery.

3. Prevent any weakening of current conservation policies or statutes.

We will fiercely defend current wildlife and land conservation laws and policies from efforts to undermine their protective provisions. We will hold agencies accountable for complying with the Endangered Species Act and other federal wildlife and land conservation laws. Our goal is to maintain the current level of wildlife protection as we seek to strengthen and expand it and enhance the rate of species recovery.

4. Ensure adequate funding for wildlife.

Recognizing the political reality that budget drives policy, Defenders has long been a leader in securing conservation funding and we will continue to build and show our strength in this area. With the current state of the economy and the zeal for budget cutting in Congress and state legislatures, wildlife programs have never been in greater peril. We will fight hard for the public and private funding and conservation programs needed to achieve greater security for North America's vulnerable wildlife.

5. Ensure adoption of effective climate-change adaptation policies and practices.

We will take the lead in securing the timely adoption of forward-looking policies to address the enormous threat rising temperatures pose to wildlife viability. We will continue to work closely with federal, state and tribal governments on wildlife adaptation and climate change policy and provide guidance and advice.



6. Implement on-the-ground conservation measures.

We will put conservation measures that reflect—and inform—our national policy work into practice. As a national conservation organization with state and regional offices, we can test new ideas and influence the implementation of national policies in the field and hold agencies accountable for complying with wildlife conservation laws.

7. Build a broad-based constituency for wildlife conservation.

Expanding the base of active conservation supporters at the grassroots and grassroots levels is critically important. We will work to translate general public support for wildlife conservation into an effective advocacy voice that influences government policies on behalf of our nation's wildlife.

All of these strategies combined will ensure that Defenders is not only an effective voice for wildlife conservation, but a dominant one in developing long-term solutions and delivering measurable results. (The chart on pages 14-15 shows how we will use these strategies to meet our 10-year conservation benchmarks.)

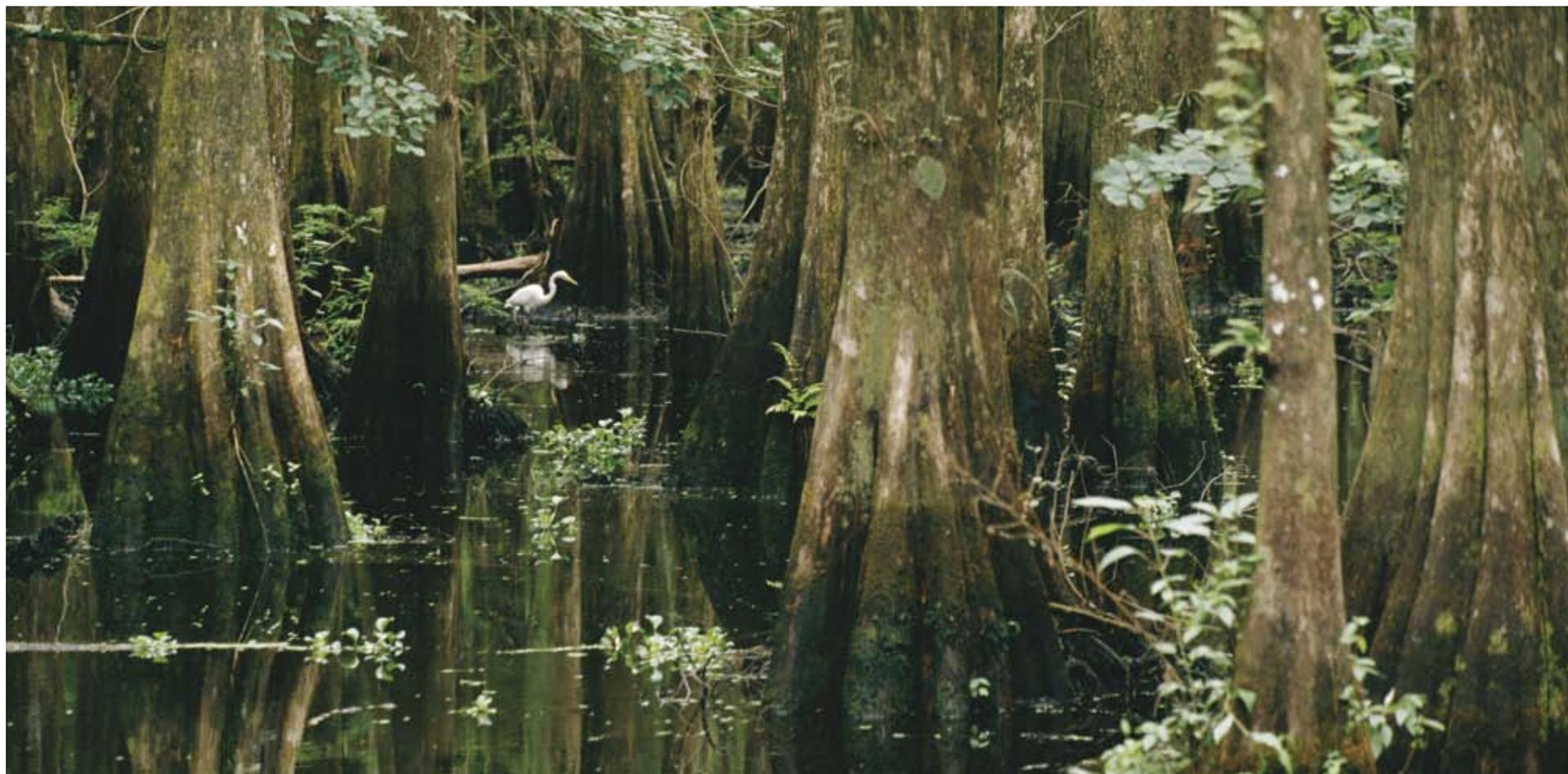


10-YEAR CONSERVATION BENCHMARKS AND PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

10-YEAR BENCHMARKS	ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA): More than half of the species currently listed under the ESA are stable or improving	KEY SPECIES: 25 vulnerable species are secure in important ecosystems and focal landscapes
PRIORITY STRATEGIES		
Secure new administrative initiatives, policies and laws that prevent species imperilment and maintain and restore the ecological integrity of landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new policies that enhance ESA effectiveness/efficiency in recovering listed species Promote pre-listing/candidate species initiatives that eliminate species threats Promote incentive-based policies/programs at federal/state levels that conserve candidate species Secure adoption of renewable energy "smart from the start" principles to avoid adversely affecting imperiled species Promote invasive species initiatives designed to protect imperiled species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new federal programs/initiatives that protect and restore key species Promote incentive-based policies and programs at the federal level that protect and restore key species Promote and implement conservation actions that ameliorate major threats to protecting and enhancing the conservation status of existing populations of key species
Support progressive state policies and programs that prevent species imperilment and loss of priority habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with targeted states to secure progressive policies for listed/candidate species Reform strategically selected state wildlife commissions Ensure that species are not delisted without adequate alternative regulatory mechanisms in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuade state programs to manage predators as other wildlife Persuade states to develop effective conservation programs to protect and restore key species
Prevent any weakening of current conservation policies or statutes and hold agencies accountable for complying with the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate ESA champions and defeat legislative proposals that would undermine the ESA Litigate to block actions that cause imperilment to listed species or undermine the ESA Petition to list strategically chosen species Curtail unsustainable international trade in North American transboundary species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Litigate to resolve threats to key species Curtail unsustainable international trade in key species with particular focus on the transboundary species of North America Oppose specific projects that adversely affect key species or preclude restoration of key species
Secure adequate funding for wildlife and land conservation/restoration programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be the leader on the federal funding process for listed species Stimulate/create incentives for state and private funding for listed/candidate species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase private and public funding for the protection, enhancement and restoration of populations of key species
Ensure that effective climate change adaptation policies and practices are adopted by key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and advocate for incorporation of climate adaptation strategies into ESA implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess climate change vulnerability and adaptation strategies for key species
Implement on-the-ground conservation measures for imperiled species and priority habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement targeted coexistence initiatives to increase social tolerance for listed species Promote pilot projects to test innovative conservation strategies for candidate species Ensure renewable energy mitigation creates a net benefit for listed/candidate species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, protect and restore priority habitat for key species Implement targeted coexistence initiatives to increase social tolerance for vulnerable species
Build an effective broad-based constituency for wildlife conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build citizen, key constituency and strategic partnership support for endangered species nationally and in legislatively important areas Build public consensus that the ESA works in legislatively important areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use key species to help build national and regional support for individual species conservation and ESA Develop strategic partnerships that promote the recovery and restoration of key species

HABITAT:
Acreage of high priority wildlife habitat managed for ecological integrity is doubled.

FEDERAL LANDS	NONFEDERAL LANDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure federal policies/plans that maintain and improve ecological integrity of habitats for vulnerable species • Promote landscape-scale management and mitigation policies which conserve vulnerable species • Secure enhanced protection for priority habitat • Secure adoption of "smart from the start" renewable energy principles to protect sensitive habitat and maintain ecological integrity • Develop collaborative opportunities for wildlife conservation on Defense Department lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate programs that maintain or restore the ecological integrity of nonfederal priority habitat • Support incentives for landowners who participate in landscape-scale conservation strategies • Secure policies and promote incentives that conserve key habitat connectivity • Promote the use of "wind guidelines" for responsibly developing renewable energy projects on nonfederal lands • Expand the use of the Conservation Registry • Collaborate on wildlife initiatives on tribal lands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure state wildlife management policies on targeted Forest Service/BLM lands do not undermine the recovery of vulnerable species • Facilitate closer state/federal land manager cooperation through landscape conservation cooperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote adoption of ecosystem services valuation systems to reward nonfederal land conservation • Promote state wildlife action plans that enhance the ecological integrity of nonfederal lands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defeat legislative proposals that would undermine the ecological integrity of federal lands • Strategically challenge inadequate management plans • Litigate to block actions harming vulnerable species or degrading ecological integrity • Litigate poorly sited renewable energy projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defeat legislative proposals that would undermine/curtail Farm Bill conservation programs • Litigate to block actions that would cause imperilment of vulnerable species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure increased funding for federal land conservation, restoration and scientific programs • Secure increased funding for Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate/secure increased funding of Farm Bill and other collaborative conservation programs • Increase funding for state invasive species programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure incorporation of climate adaptation strategies into all federal land management frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist nonfederal landowners and land trusts in adopting climate adaptation strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that renewable energy project mitigation creates a net benefit for affected species • Participate in strategically chosen national forest "early adopter" National Forest Management Act planning efforts • Secure adoption of National Wildlife Refuge System vision plan strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote incentives that restore nonfederal landscape ecological integrity • Support select nonfederal landowner ecological integrity enhancement actions • Implement targeted coexistence initiatives to increase social tolerance for listed species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build citizen and key constituency support in legislatively important areas for federal lands policy campaigns • Build agreement among stakeholders on conservation priorities necessary to achieve this benchmark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build public support for habitat policy goals • Build agreement among stakeholders on conservation priorities necessary to achieve this benchmark



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MEXICAN WOLF © JIM CLARK



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