

## Endangered act

U.S. House shouldn't rush to cut environmental protections

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If there were something called the dangerous species list, Richard Pombo would be on it. He's the misguided California congressman who wants to take a meat ax to the Endangered Species Act.

He argues that because only 10 out of about 1,300 endangered species have fully recovered under the 1973 law, it's a failure. But that isolated statistic tells only a part of the story. Environmentalists counter that it has an impressive success rate in preventing endangered species from becoming extinct.

While the law has been in effect, only nine species have disappeared and 172, including the bald eagle and the red-cockaded woodpecker, have survived that likely wouldn't have without it.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service says as many as 41 percent of the species on the endangered list have stabilized or increased their populations, an achievement the research service says "might be considered a success."

Nevertheless, Rep. Pombo wants to significantly weaken the law that has done much to protect our nation's biodiversity. He would eliminate habitat protections on millions of acres, require taxpayers to pay developers when use of their land is restricted to protect endangered species, and make it easier to use toxic pesticides. The rush to push this bill through the House serves no one well. That's why 23 Republicans have joined Democrats in seeking to delay it.

Rep. Pombo may believe the Endangered Species Act doesn't work. But don't tell that to fans of such endangered N.C. species as the Carolina northern flying squirrel (in the western mountains), the Cape Fear shiner (a yellowish minnow in the central Piedmont), the Waccamaw silverside (a minnow found only in Columbus County) or the Roan Mountain bluet (a reddish-purple flower in the state's northwest mountains). Like millions of Americans who appreciate the rich variety of life on this planet, they know the law has worked and should remain in place.