

# Conservation Group Awards Interior Secretary 'Dodo' Award

Title for Record Period with No New Named Endangered Species  
by Shirley Gregory

By not placing a single plant or animal on the federal list of endangered species since his confirmation, U.S. Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne has earned the first-ever "Rubber Dodo Award," according to [news](#) from the Center for Biological Diversity.

Kempthorne has not listed a single species as endangered during the 472 days he has served as secretary, the center said, thereby passing the previous record held by former Interior Secretary James Watt, who placed no plants or animals on the endangered species list for 376 days during his term between 1981 and 1982.

"Kempthorne is eminently deserving of the first annual Rubber Dodo award," said Kieran Suckling, policy director for the center, which established the award. "His refusal to protect a single imperiled species in more than 15 months gives him the worst record of any interior secretary in the history of the Endangered Species Act. His policies should go the way of the dodo as soon as possible."

The award is named for the dodo bird, a three-foot-tall, flightless bird discovered on the uninhabited island of Mauritius by Dutch sailors in 1598. Within less than a century, the bird had been wiped out -- hunted by humans and other animals it had before never encountered nor developed a natural fear of.

"Political appointees like Kempthorne come and go, but extinction is forever," Suckling said. "No politician has the right to destroy the future of an endangered species."

As of July, according to a [report by the Washington Post](#), only 60 species have been added to the Endangered Species list during the George W. Bush administration, compared to 550 during Bill Clinton's presidency and 256 during George H. W. Bush's presidency. The list of species being considered, but not yet approved, for endangered status is up to 278, compared to 182 in 1996.

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, federal officials can act directly to list a species as endangered, or can conduct a scientific review after being petitioned to include a species on the list. Species can also be listed as "threatened," which means they are in danger, but at less risk of extinction than "endangered" species.

The current slow pace of endangered species listings this month prompted U.S. Rep. Edward Markey (D, MA) to introduce a bill that would require the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service to publish a scientific summary explaining the decision to list or delist any endangered species or critical habitat. The legislation, House Resolution 3459, was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources on Aug. 4.

The Center for Biological Diversity says it will award the Rubber Dodo Award annually to "a deserving individual in public or private service who has done the most to drive endangered species extinct."

The Center for Biological Diversity, "Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne Wins 2007 Rubber Dodo Award." URL: (<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/press/kempthorne-08-24-2007.html>)