

« **Berman, Leahy introduce radio royalties bills** | **Main**

Endangered species on line 2

Ringtone sales have been one of the few bright spots in the music industry's rocky transition to the Digital Era. Or rather, they were **until this year**, when revenue flattened. You might blame lower ringtone prices. I, however, choose to blame the blue-throated macaw.

Yes, while **Soulja Boy** is forced to eke out a living on the diminished royalties from his ringtone sales, the Center for Biological Diversity is (gasp) *giving away* ringtones of the macaw, the Cali red-legged frog and assorted other endangered species. Today the group announced its 100,000th free download from its **RareEarthtones site**. (It didn't disclose which animal was the source of the milestone tone, but I'm guessing it was the **Rufescent Screech-owl**, whose dulcet call belies its name.)

Seriously, what's *really* endangered here is yet another element in the major record labels' boom-or-bust business model, which is predicated on getting premium returns from artists backed by costly marketing campaigns. Charging people \$2.50 for a portion of a 99-cent song isn't sustainable, not when more **devices** and **applications** are popping up that let people create ringtones for free. The next step in the evolutionary path is for ringtones to be bundled with albums or songs for an extra fee; after that, they're a throw-in to help the labels compete with free.

Here's the Center for Biological Diversity's press release, shortened to fit onto your mobile-phone screen:

Popular Endangered Species Ringtones Reach 100,000 Downloads in 150 Countries New Site Design Launches Today

TUCSON— The Center for Biological Diversity is celebrating the 100,000th free download from its endangered species ringtone site, www.rareearthtones.org. In keeping with its rising popularity, the site has received a complete makeover.

The Center's rareearthtones.org website allows users to listen to wildlife ringtones, send them directly to their phones with a simple click as well as download photos, cell phone wallpapers and facts for each of the featured wildlife species. The ringtones continue to be free and cutting-edge while the site's new look and straight forward navigation make it easier to download the roars, trills, and squawks of some of the world's most endangered species. Users can also take action to save imperiled species worldwide.

"Our endangered species ringtones have become a great way for people to personalize their cell phones and make a statement about the importance of protecting imperiled wildlife," said Peter Galvin, conservation director with the Center for Biological Diversity.

The site features free ringtones of seventy rare and endangered animals from around the world, including the polar bear, blue-throated macaw, northern goshawk, California red-legged frog, and American pika with the killer whale and Mexican gray wolf as the two most popular tones to date. The ringtones have even gained worldwide appeal in 150 countries with the U.S. ranking number one in total ringtone downloads; Iran second; Italy third; Canada fourth; Great Britain fifth; India sixth; Brazil seventh; Australia eighth; and China ninth.