

Houston & Texas News

Dec. 22, 2006, 11:22PM

Hearing new call of the wild

By DINA CAPPIELLO

Copyright 2006 Houston Chronicle Foreign Service

Nothing gets a person's heart behind the cause of protecting endangered species more than an *actual* call from the wild.

At least that is what a Tucson, Ariz.-based advocacy group is hoping.

The Center for Biological Diversity has cellular phone ringtones from more than 40 endangered species available free online at rareearthtones.com. (The feature works on most Verizon Wireless phones and those of other carriers that have Web-browsing capabilities.)

The goal is to have cell phones ring with the squawk of a raptor or roar like a polar bear. In the process, they may answer the call of conservation.

"People really respond to the wildlife ringtones — the animal calls are fascinating," said Peter Galvin, the center's conservation director. "The best part is that they inspire people to understand and work to protect endangered wildlife."

Owls, whales, songbirds, reptiles and predators like the gray wolf, polar bear and jaguar are among the options. Users also can download images and more information about the species.