



## Endangered species could be screwed by rising seas



Rising sea levels could ruin this Hawaiian monk seal's favorite beaches.

By John Upton / December 27, 2013

Sea-level rise isn't just bad news for coastal-dwelling humans. It's also bad news for coastal-dwelling critters and plants, including one out of every six threatened and endangered species in the U.S.

That's according to a Center for Biological Diversity analysis of federal data. From the new report:

Left unchecked, rising seas driven by climate change threaten 233 federally protected species in 23 coastal states. ...

The most vulnerable groups are flowering plants, which represent a third of all at-risk species, followed by anadromous fishes, birds, mammals, reptiles and freshwater mussels.

These species will be harmed as their habitat areas are submerged and eroded by rising seas. Saltwater intrusion also contaminates groundwater and causes the die-off and conversion of plant communities. ...

Faced with rising seas, coastal wildlife and their habitats will need to move inland to survive. However, because 39 percent of

<b>Five of the Species Most Threatened by Sea-level Rise</b>		
<b>SPECIES AT RISK</b>	<b>CURRENT POPULATION</b>	<b>KEY FACT</b>
<b>1. Key deer</b>	Approximately 800 deer	About 86 percent of islands occupied by the Key deer are less than 3 feet above sea level.
<b>2. Loggerhead sea turtle</b>	Approximately 17,000 females nesting each year in the United States	At Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, 42 percent of current loggerhead nesting beaches are expected to disappear with just 1.5 feet of sea-level rise.
<b>3. Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel</b>	20,000 to 38,000 squirrels	Half of the fox squirrels' habitat would be inundated by 6 feet of sea-level rise, which could occur in this century.
<b>4. Western snowy plover</b>	2,500 adults	A third of the West Coast beach habitat areas used by the plovers are less than 3 feet above sea level, and almost half are below 6 feet.
<b>5. Hawaiian monk seal</b>	About 1,000 seals	Sea-level rise poses a serious threat to monk seals' pupping beaches; one key breeding island has already disappeared.

the U.S. population lives in coastal counties, much coastal habitat has already been lost to development, leaving species with few places to move. Without help, many species are at risk of being squeezed between rising seas and shoreline development.

The authors of the report call for cutting greenhouse gas emissions (duh) as well as protecting coastal areas. "If existing coastal habitats in the United States remain intact, exposure to sea-level rise hazards could be reduced by half," the report says.

And it wouldn't hurt if Americans also refrained from accidentally procreating. To that end, the Center for Biological Diversity is handing out 25,000 free Endangered Species Condoms this holiday season.