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# New York lawmakers want to save the wolves, even if they are extinct here

**Endangered status would preserve habitat for their return**

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*Lawmakers are joining the call to keep wolves on the state endangered list.*

*Getty*

ALBANY -- A day after gray wolves officially came off the federal Endangered Species list, lawmakers in New York are urging the state to keep the canines on the list here, even though they've been extinct in the Empire State for decades.

Retaining them on the state's endangered list could help protect potential habitat for the animals should they make a comeback or be imported into the state at some point.

"We certainly wanted to put our concerns on the record," Long Island Sen. Todd Kaminsky said of the letter he wrote with his fellow Long Islander Steve Englebright to state Environmental Commissioner Basil Seggos on Tuesday.

Both Democrats chair their respective chambers' [environmental committees](#).

In addition to keeping wolves on the list, they also want to keep the eastern cougar, hawksbill sea turtle, and humpback whale on the New York State Endangered Species list as well.

And they want to retain the osprey, Cooper's hawk, and sharp-shinned hawk on the species of special concern list.

"We also ask that you ensure climate change considerations are included as part of the review process," adds the letter.

"We certainly think if they want to be there it would benefit the area," Kaminsky said of wolves, which historically inhabited parts of northern New York such as the Adirondacks but were hunted to extinction in the state in the 19th century.

Conservationists agree, especially since wolves came off the federal list on Monday, as part of a Trump Administration plan to reduce the number of protected species. They first [spoke up](#) about a year ago when Seggos said they were looking at updating the list -- a process that is ongoing.

"Protection on New York's state endangered species list is even more important now that gray wolves have lost federal Endangered Species Act protection," said Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation director and senior attorney at the Center for Biodiversity.

Wolves still remain in parts of Canada, notably in the Algonquin National Park in Ontario. That's 120 miles from the New York border, which is the "dispersal distance," or ability of a species to travel from one habitat to another, noted Adkins.

The lawmakers in their letter note that there have been sightings of wolves in northern New York and they referenced an eastern cougar spotting in Connecticut.

While wildlife officials in the Nutmeg State say there are no cougars or mountain lions there, one was confirmed to be hit and killed on a highway in 2011 after traveling east from South Dakota.

“While we cannot say when these animals will return to our land and seascape, we believe it is our obligation as stewards to be prepared for that eventuality. These animals once occurred in abundance in New York and may again, especially as the climate changes,” states the letter.

Kaminsky didn’t say they are pushing for reintroduction of wolves, although that will be happening in Colorado after voters in a November referendum supported bringing them back to the wild parts of their state.

Most gray wolves live in remote areas of the upper Midwest including Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, according to Sylvia Fallon, senior director of the wildlife nature program for the Natural Resources Defense Council. There also is a small population of Mexican gray wolves in Arizona and New Mexico.

“With the removal of federal protections it would be great for the state to keep the protections for wolves even if just for the opportunity for the wolves on their own to come back there,” said Fallon.