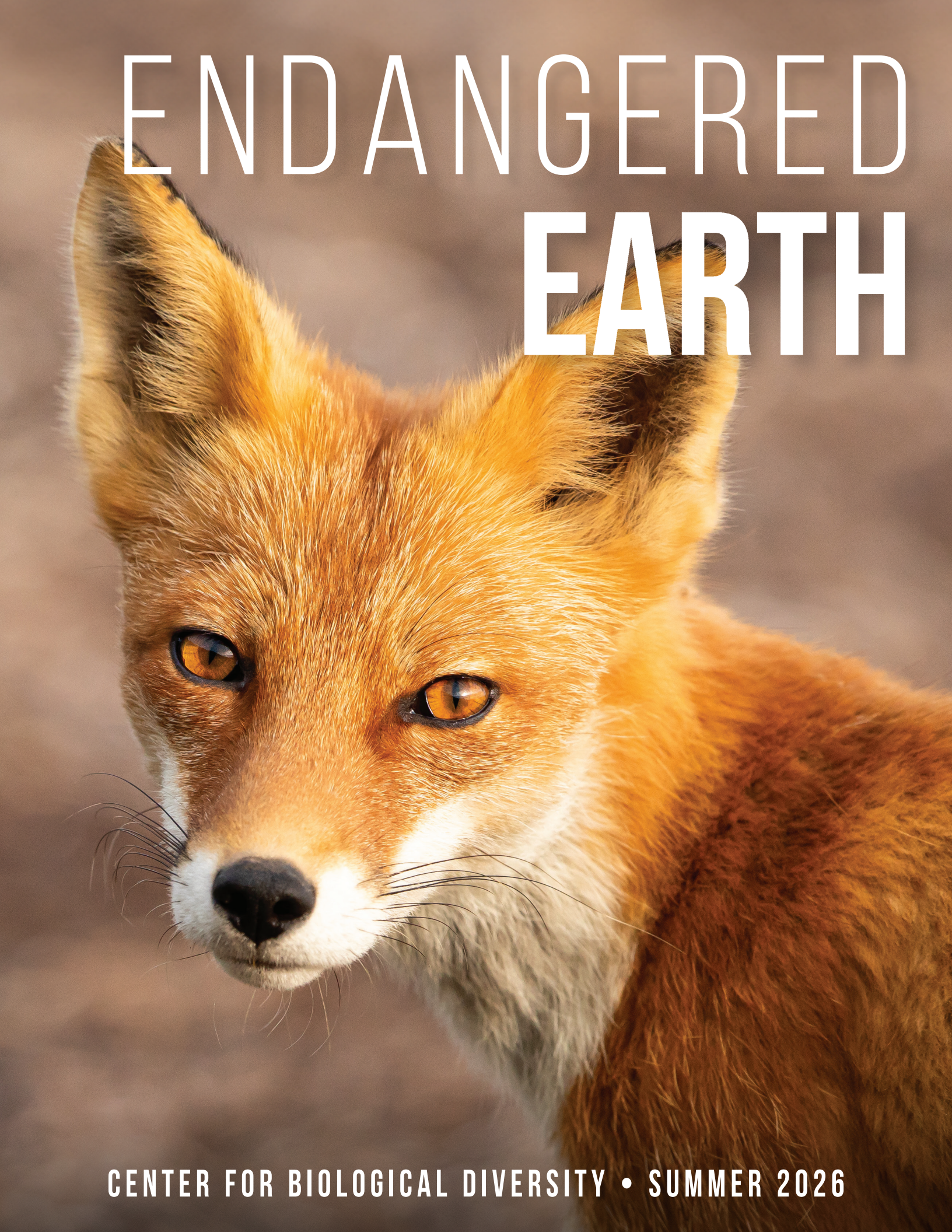


# ENDANGERED EARTH



CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY • SUMMER 2026



# Restoring the promise OF AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS

Like a trail in a national park, breathe in a lungful of mountain air in a national forest, or soak your feet in a roiling river on BLM land and something shifts inside of you. The noise falls away. America's public lands have always done this: restored our spirits, filled our rivers with clean water, and provided irreplaceable habitat for wildlife.

But the promise of the people's lands has been broken.

Over the past century, powerful interests have hijacked our public lands to squeeze out profits for private industry. Some 90% of old-growth forests have been liquidated for timber. Strip mines and oil rigs have proliferated across pristine landscapes, ripping apart ecosystems while paying almost nothing in royalties. Rivers have been dammed, diverted and poisoned. Wildlife have been pushed toward oblivion: billions of birds gone, half of America's large mammals vanished in the last 50 years, and unique populations of elk, salmon, wolves, bears and mink wiped out forever.

This didn't happen by accident.

Corporations spent decades capturing land-management agencies and gutting the policies that protect our public lands. The institutions built to safeguard them now rubber-stamp their destruction.

Americans across the political spectrum have never wanted this. Hunters and anglers want clean rivers teeming with cutthroat trout and bull elk bugling in the backcountry. Hikers and campers want wild places that are actually wild. Rural communities want lands supporting their local economies — not strip-mined bare by foreign corporations.

We're done watching corporations feed our public lands into a woodchipper.

So we're launching a new campaign to return to the promise of America's public lands — one that preserves all 640 million acres and protects more, putting people, wildlife and clean water above private profit.

That means protecting every remaining wild river, every old-growth forest, every coastline and every roadless area not yet handed over to corporate industry. It means honoring Tribal sovereignty, expanding co-management, and protecting sacred sites. It means vastly expanding our public lands system by dedicating new parks, recreation areas, and national restoration areas that would put an army of people dedicated to healing degraded lands to work.

This is a long-term battle. The corporations controlling our public lands have money, lobbyists, and decades of institutional capture on their side. But we have more powerful tools: the abiding love hundreds of millions of Americans feel for these wild places and the will to fight.

We're building a grassroots movement with the moral clarity, joy, and political power to turn that love into real change.

America's public lands deserve better than what's been done to them. So do the wildlife pushed to the brink, the communities that depend on clean water, and every person who has ever stood in a wild place and felt something shift inside them.

We're fighting for that future. **Join us.**



*Laiken Jordahl and Ryan Beam are organizing the Center's campaign to enact a new vision for public lands.*



There's nowhere on Earth like Alaska. From the breathtaking tundra of the Arctic North to the ancient old-growth forests of the Tongass in the south, Alaska personifies the wild.

It's home to some of the most stunning wildlife on Earth: polar bears, walrus, belugas, brown bears, and caribou. Millions of birds migrate to Alaska each summer to breed and feast. Whales come in search of food that fuels their incredible, year-long journeys.

In many ways it's one of the last of our truly wild places, with some of the largest intact natural landscapes still in existence on the planet.

But public lands and waters in Alaska are as vulnerable as they've ever been. Emboldened by Trump, the oil and gas industry is pressing harder

to drill more, pollute more and destroy more. Timber companies are eyeing massive old-growth clear-cuts. Gold mines threaten national parks. The trawl-fishing industry wants to push into pristine Arctic waters. Bears and wolves are being persecuted from the ground and air.

This is a critical moment in the fight to save Alaska's wild, and we're meeting the moment: adding staff, activating supporters, building coalitions, and positioning ourselves to lead the long-term battles ahead.

The Center has worked in Alaska for decades, securing important victories like protecting hundreds of millions of square miles of habitat for polar bears, North Pacific right whales, and ice seals. We've also blocked oil and gas in the Arctic, halted old-growth logging in the Tongass, and defended wildlife refuges from those who want to see them industrialized and polluted.

We've done it the way the Center always has: razor-sharp legal strategies and gutsy activism, in coalition when possible but alone when necessary — all with an eye on the grand, uncompromising vision of securing long-term protections for this unparalleled place.

# Meeting the Moment in ALASKA



Cooper Freeman is the Center's Alaska director.

# FIGHTING FOR THE FIERCE

## New Legal Effort Seeks Habitat Protections for American Wolverines

Wolverines may be tough as nails, but they need our protection anyway.

The Center and allies have been fighting for years, including multiple rounds of litigation, to help wolverines in the lower 48, where their numbers in the wild hover around 300. Now we've had to go back to court again.

After a petition and multiple lawsuits, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2023 finally protected wolverines in the contiguous United States under the Endangered Species Act. The most significant dangers to the animals, the agency said, came from climate change, including warming temperatures and decreasing snowpack.

But in making that important declaration, the Service failed a crucial step: designating habitat that's critical to wolverines' survival. The agency set a deadline for making that determination, November 2024, and then blew right past it.

So earlier this year the Center sued the Service because we know we can't save wolverines if we don't protect where they live.

I hate to contemplate losing such an important and fascinating carnivore.

Wolverines are most famous for their ferocity and tenacity. They've been known to prey on animals



as big as moose, while stories tell of them chasing mountain lions, bears and wolves from their kills. But wolverines have also been described as curious, intelligent, playful and cautious. They're long-distance travelers with large ranges, usually finding a home in snowy, remote areas where they can build dens and raise kits.

In the past they lived across much of the northern portion of the continent, including the Great Lakes region, the Rocky Mountains, and the Cascade Mountains. Unfortunately, during the 1800s and early 1900s, they were wiped out in much of the contiguous United States by trapping and poisoning (and face threats to this day from incidental trapping and habitat loss).

But the good news is they're still here, albeit at low numbers, and we have a chance to give them a real future.



Andrea Zaccardi is the Center's carnivore conservation legal director.



# CATCH UP QUICK: 8 Things to Know



## PURR-FECT

California's Fish and Game Commission has granted permanent protection to Southern California and Central Coast mountain lions under the state Endangered Species Act. The decision, following a petition by the Center and friends, recognizes the imperiled status of pumas across a large swath of the state, from the Bay Area to the Mexico border.



## FLEXING MUSSELS

After litigation by the Center, the feds protected 3,814 river miles in 17 states, from Minnesota to New York and Alabama to Virginia, for four freshwater mussels — snuffbox, spectaclecase, sheepnose, and rayed bean — need clean, flowing rivers to survive. Protecting this habitat will also benefit local people who enjoy cleaner water.



## TURTLE TROUBLES

Wood turtles, once common across the Northeast and upper Midwest, have declined by about 50% in less than a decade, often because of development, roads, poaching and predation. The Center and 66 other groups and people are now urging the feds to give them the protection they deserve and so desperately need.



## HELP FOR ICE SEALS

A federal judge has upheld a federal designation protecting nearly 160 million acres of waters off Alaska's Arctic coast as critical habitat for imperiled bearded and ringed seals. The Center, which has fought for years for ice seals, intervened in the case to defend the habitat designation from a challenge by the state of Alaska.



## HOP TO IT

We sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over its decision not to protect the chubby, burrowing Illinois chorus frog under the Endangered Species Act. The frogs' spring songs once filled the sand prairies of the Midwest, but virtually all their native habitat has been lost to agriculture and development.



## A GREEN THUMB'S UP

A flower in the Great Basin known as the Barren Valley collomia hasn't been seen in more than a decade, but experts are confident it still survives. That's why the Center has petitioned to get it federal protection. These small annual plants with tiny, blue-white flowers are known from just a few spots in Oregon and Nevada.



## FOR THE BIRDS

After a petition by the Center and allies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has decided to take an in-depth look at whether federal protections are warranted for Wilson's phalaropes, migratory shorebirds who rely on saline lakes in the American West, including the Great Salt Lake.

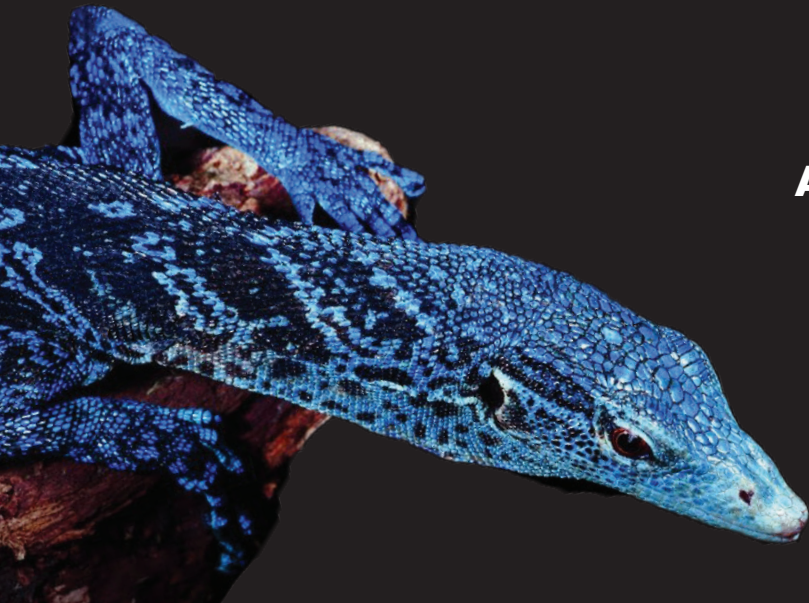


## GOOD NEWS FOR LOBOS

There are now more than 300 endangered Mexican gray wolves in Arizona and New Mexico, according to a new tally by state officials. We've been fighting for years to save these lobos and ensure they have a sustainable future. The latest figures — 319 in 2025 versus 286 in 2024 — are a good sign, but they're not recovered yet.



# U.S. PET TRADE THREATENS GLOBAL WILDLIFE



CLOSE TO **300,000** ANIMALS  
MOVE ACROSS U.S. BORDERS ON AN  
**AVERAGE DAY FOR THE PET TRADE:**

## IMPORTS

Fish:  
194,972

Arachnids:  
46,175

Amphibians:  
4,037

Reptiles:  
1,625

Mammals:  
1,328

Birds:  
102

## EXPORTS

Fish:  
44,256

Reptiles:  
2,645

Birds:  
1,403

Amphibians:  
69

Arachnids:  
38

Mammals:  
16



A new report from the Center finds that the United States imports more than 90 million live animals each year for the pet trade, including amphibians, arachnids, birds, aquarium fish, mammals, reptiles and numerous imperiled species. About 30% of the animals imported for pets each year are taken directly from their wild habitats.

Between 2016 and 2024, the United States imported more than 12.5 million animals that international scientists consider to be threatened with extinction. Wildlife exploitation, including for the pet trade, is a major driver of species' declines and extinctions globally.

Meanwhile, the U.S. remains a major exporter of wildlife for the pet trade, sending at least 17 million exotic animals to pet markets abroad each year on average. Seven of the top 10 pet exports are turtle species, which are among the most threatened groups of vertebrates and are increasingly at risk from overexploitation and habitat loss.

We're encouraging people to avoid buying exotic pets. We're also urging U.S. policymakers to ban the trade of wild-caught animals for the pet trade, implement a positive list of species appropriate for pet ownership, increase funding for effective enforcement of existing trade restrictions, and improve tracking and transparency of the wildlife trade.

## Fighting Trump's 'Extinction Committee'

This spring a rarely convened but extraordinarily powerful federal panel met in Washington, D.C., for the first time in nearly 30 years. Formally known as the Endangered Species Committee — but often referred to as the “God Squad” or “Extinction Committee” because of its power to decide the fate of an endangered species — the panel met to grant a sweeping exemption under the Endangered Species Act for all oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico.

The vote was unprecedented. For the first time in the Act's 53-year history, the Extinction Committee baselessly invoked “national security” to override protections for some of our nation's most imperiled animals. The consequences could be devastating.

The exemption will deliver a crushing blow to sea turtles, manatees, whooping cranes, and dozens of other beloved species that depend on the Gulf's fragile ecosystem — and will likely drive critically endangered Rice's whales to extinction.

Affectionately dubbed “America's whale” because they spend their entire lives in the Gulf of Mexico, the Rice's whale population collapsed after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and now numbers only about 51 individuals.

The Extinction Committee's decision sets a dangerous precedent with consequences far beyond the Gulf. This same playbook could be used to greenlight drilling in the Arctic, condemning polar bears to extinction, or allow logging in old-growth forests where northern spotted owls are barely clinging to survival. No area is safe under this extinction blueprint.

The Trump administration has done more to gut the Endangered Species Act than any other in history — dismantling decades-long habitat protections, weakening lifesaving protections for threatened species, and forcing out hundreds of federal biologists so industry can clearcut forests, pollute our waters, and bulldoze our most cherished wild places.

We won't stand by while extinction is treated as the cost of doing business. We're fighting hard to defend the Endangered Species Act — and the wildlife and future it was meant to protect.



Stephanie Kurose is the Center's deputy  
director of government affairs.





# Monarchs Still Vulnerable to Extinction

The latest count of migratory monarchs who winter in Mexico shows that the beloved orange-and-black butterflies remain vulnerable to extinction.

Though marking an improvement over last year, this year’s count of 7.24 acres of occupied habitat remains perilously low. That area’s less than half the size needed for monarchs to be clear of the danger of migratory collapse.

Migratory monarchs have declined by more than 80% since the 1990s. Monarchs were proposed for Endangered Species Act protection in December 2024, but instead of finalizing protections Trump officials delayed the decision as a “long-term action,” with no definitive date for listing. The Center for Biological Diversity and Center for Food Safety filed a lawsuit in February to secure a date for final protections.



Monarch butterflies west of the Rocky Mountains overwinter mostly on the central coast of California.

The western migratory population is down more than 95% since the 1980s and numbered less than 12,260 butterflies this winter, the third lowest count on record.

A federal assessment of the monarch’s status found that in the next 60 years, eastern monarchs have up to a 74% chance of going extinct, and western monarchs have up to a 99% chance.

Conservationists first sought federal safeguards for the butterflies in 2014, asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect them under the Endangered Species Act. Monarchs were placed on a candidate waiting list for protection in 2020. The centers filed a lawsuit to elevate them from bureaucratic limbo, resulting in the proposed listing in 2024.

The latest count makes clear these colorful, irreplaceable animals still desperately need our help.

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# From the Director: RISING TO THE OCCASION

The fight to save life on Earth is rarely easy — who thought it would be? — but the first half of Trump’s second term is pushing this work into uncharted territory.

The Trump administration and far-right members of Congress are pulling out all the stops to dismantle the Endangered Species Act, get around its lifesaving requirements, and stop groups like ours from doing what’s needed to save species from extinction.

In the Gulf of Mexico, Trump’s “Extinction Committee” (sometimes called the “God Squad”) exempted oil and gas activities from Endangered Species Act protections. It’s a ludicrous and dangerous move that, if upheld, could fast-track offshore oil development at the expense of endangered wildlife, including Rice’s whales, of whom only 50 are left on Earth.

It’s the first time in the history of the Endangered Species Act that this committee has invoked “national security” to call off protections for species on the brink of extinction. It sets a deeply troubling

precedent — paving the way to decimate spotted owls, sea turtles, and polar bears — not just during this administration but for those to come.

We know there are other efforts afoot within the Trump administration to undermine the Endangered Species Act. They’ve made it clear they want to make it easier to destroy wildlife habitat and harder for species to get the help they need.

Meanwhile emboldened Republicans in Congress have launched baseless attacks on the Center itself. These are classic bullying tactics meant to intimidate us and keep us from doing what we do. It won’t work.

The Center’s mission has never been as important as it is today. As the extinction crisis accelerates and the climate emergency deepens, we’re more resolved than ever to stand against these challenges and save every animal and plant that needs our help.

It’s not impossible. Just in the past few months, the Center helped overturn horrific provisions to weaken the Act during Trump’s first term, notched new protection for more than 3,800 miles of rivers and streams, and secured permanent state protections for mountain lions in California. We’ll never stop fighting for what’s right, no matter how difficult it gets.



*Kierán Suckling*

Kierán Suckling  
Executive Director







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The Center for Biological Diversity's decades-long history is unmatched: We've secured protections for more than 770 species and over 700 million acres of habitat. Help us continue this extraordinary legacy by joining the Owls Club.

By leaving a legacy gift through a bequest or making the Center a beneficiary of your retirement plan or other estate plan, you'll be supporting the fight to save endangered wildlife for generations to come. To learn more about your legacy giving options, please call us at (520) 396-1141 or email [owlsclub@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:owlsclub@biologicaldiversity.org).

**[Biologicaldiversity.org/Owlsclub](http://Biologicaldiversity.org/Owlsclub)**

## ENDANGERED

# EARTH

is the membership newsletter of the Center for Biological Diversity. With the support of more than 1.8 million members and supporters, the Center works through science, law and creative media to secure a future for all species, great and small, hovering on the brink of extinction. Endangered Earth is published three times yearly in January, July and October.

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