For starters, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs to produce a roadmap for wolf recovery, something the Center has been urging it to do for a long time. We finally got some good news earlier this year when the agency announced it will develop — for the first time ever — a national recovery plan for listed gray wolves in the lower 48 states. That momentous commitment stems from our decades of advocacy and successful recent lawsuit, and we're thrilled.

This planning effort marks an important new phase in the fight to save wolves. We’re hopeful that the Fish and Wildlife Service will finally focus on analyzing what’s needed for real wolf recovery in this country, rather than once again trying to remove wolves’ protection prematurely and illegally.

But the agency will exclude wolves in the northern Rockies from this planning effort unless they regain the federal protection Congress stripped away from them in 2011.

So, while the national recovery plan gets underway, we’re also keeping a close eye on what’s happening in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Unfortunately wolf-haters there have been sabotaging decades of recovery efforts. Scientists predict that the rampant wolf-killing encouraged by those states’ laws could reduce the northern Rockies wolf population from an estimated 2,534 wolves to as few as 667.

We can’t let that happen. The Center has been leading efforts to restore Endangered Species Act protection to wolves in the northern Rockies — we filed a petition to relist them under the Act and sued the Service for missing its deadline to respond. Then, when it denied our listing petition earlier this year, we immediately sued.

In the meantime we continue to oppose the inexcusable exploitation of wolves under state management in the northern Rockies, and our work has led to several important victories.

After a Wyoming man used his snowmobile to run over a young female wolf, we filed letters from more than 60 conservation groups with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management asking them to immediately ban that abhorrent — and still lawful — hunting practice on the federal lands they manage.

In Idaho contract killers receive thousands of taxpayer dollars to shoot wolves from aircraft, even gunning down wolves on federal national forests. With the support of more than 60 other conservation groups, we filed a petition with the Forest Service asking for a ban on such “predator control” measures.

In response to a successful lawsuit by the Center and our partners, a federal court has stopped wolf trapping and snaring in Idaho’s Panhandle, Clearwater, Salmon, and Upper Snake regions to avoid harming federally protected grizzly bears, who can be caught in cruel and indiscriminate traps set for wolves — a violation of the Endangered Species Act.

But, of course, we can’t take our eyes off what’s happening with wolves elsewhere.

In Washington state we’ve been pushing relentlessly for new rules that prioritize using nonlethal methods of conflict deterrence over killing wolves. This campaign bore fruit earlier this year, when Gov. Jay Inslee directed the state’s Fish and Wildlife Commission to draft the rules we requested.

In California it’s been awe inspiring to see several new wolf packs emerge. It was only a decade ago that California had its first wolf pack in nearly 100 years; now the state is home to around 45 wolves. And in Colorado we’re hopeful that newly released wolves will be allowed to regain their rightful place in the southern Rockies ecosystem.

Y
ears ago the Endangered Species Act returned wolves to their rightful place atop the food chain in the northern Rockies and parts of the Midwest. But that doesn’t mean the work is done — not by a long shot. If wolves are to truly recover we need to have more of them, in more places, with more protection to ensure they survive and thrive.

COMING SOON:
A NATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN FOR WOLVES

Collette Adkins is the director of the Center’s Carnivore Conservation program.
NEW LEGAL ACTION AIMS TO PROTECT 4 IMPERILED BEES

I’ve been studying bees for years, but the first American bumblebee I ever saw in the wild was just this spring in the Texas Hill Country outside of Fredericksburg. She was the queen of a sweeping bluebonnet patch, big enough to be spotted from across the field.

Finding what was once the most common bumblebee in the United States shouldn’t be hard. But American bumblebees, fuzzy flyers who pollinate flowers and crops, have declined by 89% and have entirely disappeared from eight states.

Sad! They’re far from the only native bees in decline and in danger of vanishing.

That’s why this spring, as the wildflowers bloomed and bees awakened from their winter hibernation, the Center sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make it stop ignoring its duty to protect American bumblebees, Southern Plains bumblebees, variable cuckoo bumblebees, and Florida’s blue calamintha bees. The Service has failed to take legally required action on three petitions filed by conservation groups seeking protection for these imperiled bees.

When it comes to saving endangered species, there’s no time to waste. Southern Plains bumblebees, the southernmost U.S. bumblebees, are half as abundant as they once were. The variable cuckoo bumblebee hasn’t been seen since 1999.

In Florida, blue calamintha bees have one of the smallest ranges of any bee species in North America. Today they’re found only in the sand scrubland of central Florida, where they feed on just two plants, one of which is itself an endangered species.

These are perilous times for our bees, many of whom are vital for wildflower and crop pollination. They’re all at risk from a variety of unchecked threats, including exposure from highly toxic pesticides, habitat destruction and disease.

Only two bees in the continental United States are currently protected under the Endangered Species Act, but one-quarter of U.S. native bee species are likely in decline. In addition to the four bees we just sued to protect, hundreds of other species potentially need protection to thwart their extinction.

The good news is that the tools provided by the Endangered Species Act can absolutely save these bees. Bees are resilient and can bounce back with improved habitat and reduced toxic pesticide exposure. Small improvements to habitat such as tolerating flowering weeds, planting native flowering plants, mowing less, and reducing pesticide use make a big difference.

But we need to move fast. Every day of delay pushes these bees closer to the brink. That’s why we’re redoubling our efforts to do whatever it takes to save them. Stay tuned for how you can help.
Whales are ancient giants of the ocean, ambassadors of the deep and some of the most beleaguered mammals on Earth. They’ve endured hundreds of years of persecution and experienced profound losses along the way. Today, many remain under threat from ship strikes, oil and gas development, fishing-gear entanglement, pollution, food losses, and manmade blasts that damage their hearing. The Center has spent decades working to save some of the most vulnerable species.

SAVING WHALES

NORTH PACIFIC RIGHT WHALE
**STATUS:** With just 30-50 left on Earth, these critically endangered whales roam from the Bering Sea to Baja California and can weigh up to 100 tons, reach 64 feet in length and produce consistent, distinguishable songs. They remain under threat by vessel strikes, entanglement in fishing gear, ocean noise, algal blooms and climate change. **OUR WORK:** After securing 36,000 square miles of protected critical habitat in the Bering Sea, we’ve filed a new petition to expand those protected areas because of growing threats from vessel strikes, fishing gear, oil spills and ocean noise.

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE
**STATUS:** These whales — down to fewer than 360 individuals — live off the Atlantic Coast, can weigh up to 70 tons and grow to more than 50 feet long. They were decimated during the heyday of the whaling industry. Key threats include vessel strikes and entanglement in commercial fishing gear. **OUR WORK:** After winning the protection of nearly 40,000 square miles of the Atlantic Ocean as critical habitat, we filed an emergency petition to reduce ship speeds and secure other measures to protect them from vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear.

PACIFIC HUMPBACK WHALE
**STATUS:** These whales are endangered on the U.S. West Coast; one population off California and Oregon has fewer than 1,500. With adults that can weigh up to 40 tons and live to the age of 90, humpbacks have some of the longest migrations of any mammal and are a favorite of whale watchers. Key threats include fishing-gear entanglement, pollution, ship strikes and climate change. **OUR WORK:** After helping win 116,000 square miles of protected habitat safeguarding them from oil spills, we’ve turned our attention to preventing these whales from becoming entangled in fishing gear, including by winning a court victory showing that the federal government wasn’t doing enough to protect them.

RICE’S WHALE
**STATUS:** These sleek baleen whales live in the Gulf of Mexico, reach up to 40 feet long and have an incredible vocal repertoire. They’re critically endangered, with only about 50 left on Earth. Key threats include oil and gas extraction, pollution, noise and ship strikes. **OUR WORK:** As pressure mounts for more oil and gas drilling in the Gulf, we’ve been fighting attempts by the fossil fuel industry to reduce protections for these whales and open the door for industrial-scale development in their prime habitat.

COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE
**STATUS:** Critically endangered with around 300 left on Earth, these unique belugas feature white coloring, stunning vocal sounds and tight social groupings. They live in Alaska’s Cook Inlet, can weigh more than 3,000 pounds and reach 16 feet in length. Key threats include lack of food, pollution, noise, oil and gas development, disease and climate change. **OUR WORK:** We won protection for these whales under the Endangered Species Act, along with more than 3,000 square miles of protected habitat. Since then, we continue to fight projects and policies that will put them at risk and hinder their recovery.
SAVING WILSON’S PHALAROPE WILL HELP SAVE GREAT SALT LAKE

I’ve lived in Salt Lake City for 40 years and have never seen Utah’s Great Salt Lake, and nearby saline lake ecosystems, face a crisis like this.

Water diversions, the climate emergency and development have dried these systems and pushed them to the brink. In 2022 Great Salt Lake reached its lowest level in recorded history and scientists observed the food web collapsing. Total disaster has been staved off by two extraordinarily wet winters, but the collapse of the lake is predicted to continue.

One of the most troubling aspects of this unfolding disaster is what it’s doing to wildlife, especially birds. The Great Salt Lake is a critical piece of the Pacific Flyway, hosting over 10 million migratory birds every year from over 330 species. One of the birds most at risk from Great Salt Lake’s collapse is a small shorebird called Wilson’s phalarope. It’s a joy to watch them in the shallow waters of the lake, spinning in small circles to stir up invertebrates to eat. More than 60% of the world’s population of Wilson’s phalaropes rely on the lake, using it as a way station to fuel up (mostly in the form of brine flies and shrimp) for their fall trip to South America, one of the longest migrations in the world.

Great Salt Lake collapse. That’s why the Center and allies petitioned this spring to protect Wilson’s phalaropes under the Endangered Species Act, which would provide important habitat safeguards. Restoring the Great Salt Lake to a consistently ecologically healthy level will ensure the survival of these shorebirds — and the hundreds of other species that rely on Great Salt Lake.

Utah’s state leaders have taken some steps to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem, but new commitments to allow water to flow into the lake fall far short of what’s needed to prevent its collapse and protect Wilson’s phalaropes should Great Salt Lake collapse.

Scientists say at least a million extra acre-feet per year are needed for Great Salt Lake to be at sustainable levels, and we’re nowhere close to that. Wilson’s phalarope will only survive with huge infusions of water.

This little bird’s fate is intimately tied to the future of the lake and the Pacific Flyway. If we can save this bird and this lake, we may just save ourselves too.

FINALLY, A SAFE HAVEN
AMERICA’S RAREST BATS GET 1.1 MILLION ACRES OF PROTECTED HABITAT

A nyone lucky enough to spot a Florida bonneted bat in the wild is in for a treat.

Named for the broad ears that hang over their foreheads, reminiscent of Princess Leia’s iconic hairstyle, bonneted bats are the largest of Florida’s 13 bat species and the second-largest in North America. Their wingspan can reach an incredible 20 inches, which gives them an impressive top speed while flying but a relatable clumsiness in tight spaces. As a result, the species requires dark, open spaces for foraging.

Florida bonneted bats use very low-frequency echolocation calls, so some people are actually able to hear their birdlike chirps as they hunt for insects. They roost in old tree cavities but must also rely on artificial structures as the number of natural roosts continues to decrease.

It’s been clear for a long time, though, that these amazing bats are in serious trouble. Pesticides and encroaching sprawl development have driven them to the brink of extinction, and the Center has been fighting for years to get them the help they desperately need. Our litigation spurred their protection under the Endangered Species Act in 2013; then, in 2018 and again in 2022, the Center and our allies sued to secure habitat protections.

So we celebrated this spring with news that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was finally designating more than 1 million acres of critical habitat across 13 counties for these bats, native only to Florida.

This step is crucial, since we know that species with protected critical habitat are twice as likely to be recovering as those without.

Our fight to save Florida bonneted bats didn’t end with the critical habitat designations. Last December a federal judge found that the National Park Service had violated the law when it released land-use restrictions on a site proposed for a controversial water park and retail development.

This development threatened the largest known population of bonneted bats, who routinely use the dark, open space for foraging. The site is a rare patch of globally imperiled pine rocklands that supports several protected species, including one of only two known populations of Miami tiger beetles.

Critical habitat designations were key to stopping that development because the Endangered Species Act requires agencies to ensure that critical habitat isn’t harmed or destroyed by their actions. When the National Park Service failed to follow the law, we stepped in.

We’re hopeful now that Florida bonneted bats are heading toward recovery — and that future generations will be able to spot them in the wild someday.
PROTECTION AT LAST FOR DUNES SAGEBRUSH LIZARDS

More than 20 years after the Center petitioned to protect dunes sagebrush lizards under the Endangered Species Act, they’re finally getting the help they deserve.

In May the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added these tiny lizards of southeastern New Mexico and West Texas to the endangered species list — and pledged to protect some of their most important habitat.

The lizards are native to a small portion of the Permian Basin and have lost more than 95% of their only home to oil and gas development and the mining of sand for fracking.

Even before the drilling boom, as early as 1982, the Service identified the lizards as likely needing protection, in part because of the destruction of their habitat for agriculture. But the Service didn’t act until a 2022 lawsuit and legal agreement with the Center forced it to move.

Dunes sagebrush lizards have the second-smallest range of any lizard in North America, hunting insects and spiders in the windblown dunes and burrowing into the sand beneath low-lying shinnery oak shrubs for protection from extreme temperatures.

In 2002 the Center submitted our scientific petition to get them protected, and in 2010, prompted by our followup litigation, the Service proposed protection — but instead struck a deal with the Texas Comptroller’s Office to deny the lizards protection in exchange for nonbinding agreements to safeguard some of their habitat.

In 2018 the Center again petitioned for protection, and the Service issued an initial finding that a listing was warranted. In 2020, in response to our legal action, the Service issued a five-year review and found that a listing was warranted. But it took another lawsuit, in 2022, to finally prompt this year’s decision.

The Service has long failed to provide timely protection to species in need. The entire process of listing species and designating critical habitat is supposed to take two to three years — but on average it has taken the Service 12 years to protect qualifying species. In many cases it has taken decades. At least 47 species have gone extinct waiting for the Service to decide.

Dunes sagebrush lizards have the second-smallest range of any lizard in North America, hunting insects and spiders in the windblown dunes and burrowing into the sand beneath low-lying shinnery oak shrubs for protection from extreme temperatures.

As humans drastically transform nature into highways, shipping channels, urban sprawl, clearcut forests and drained wetlands, wildlife are forced into dangerous spaces they didn’t evolve to survive in — often with devastating results.

In North Carolina a beloved young red wolf named Muppet was hit and killed by a car in May. Vehicle strikes are the leading cause of death for endangered Florida panthers, and boat collisions have been devastating to manatees. Off the coast of Georgia, earlier this year, a North Atlantic right whale calf died after apparently being hit by a ship. About 1,000 migrating songbirds perished in a single night last fall when they flew into a building in Chicago. A famous Oregon wolf named OR-93 died after wandering into California several years ago and getting struck by a vehicle on Interstate 5. Farther south, mountain lions in the Los Angeles area are forced to navigate clogged highways and busy suburban neighborhoods.

These animals are simply trying to get from one place to another, often in search of food, mates, or seasonal resting spots — or just roaming across territory as their ancestors have done for millennia.

The Center has become a leading voice in pushing for safe road crossings for wildlife in crowded states like California and Florida. We’re advocating to limit ocean ship speeds where whales frequently travel and seeking better protections for birds, monarchs, pronghorn and other migrating species.

It’s heartening to see progress being made, but the changes aren’t coming fast enough as so many of these species face multiple drivers of extinction: pollution, exploitation, habitat destruction, and climate breakdown. We remain dedicated to the big and small lights that ensure safe passage for all — whether on the wing, overland, or moving through the water.

As always, thanks for being part of this lifesaving work.

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

SAFE PASSAGE

Kierán Suckling
Executive Director
The Center for Biological Diversity’s decades-long history is unmatched: We’ve secured protections for more than 750 species and more than half a billion acres of wildlife 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 (646) 770-7206 or email owlsclub@biologicaldiversity.org

Biologicaldiversity.org/Owlsclub

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