



FALL 2014

Endangered
earth

CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



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ON THE WEB



Endangered Species Ringtones: Hear the call of the wild? Or want to, whenever your cell phone rings? At the Center’s [RareEarthtones.org](https://www.rareearthtones.org), you can download free ringtones of the songs, roars, chirps and howls of more than 100 imperiled animals — and wallpaper, too. (Check out [LlamadasSalvajes.org](https://www.llamadasalvajes.org) for ringtones with descriptions in Spanish.)

Loggerheads Win Big

300,000 Square Miles of Ocean, 685 Miles of Beaches Protected as Habitat for Sea Turtles

This summer brought some of the most incredible news in the history of the Endangered Species Act: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service jointly designated 685 miles of beaches from Mississippi to North Carolina, and more than 300,000 square miles of ocean on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, for Northwest Atlantic loggerhead sea turtles — the largest critical habitat designation *ever*. And the designation couldn’t have come at a better time.

When loggerhead hatchlings are born, they emerge from their sandy nests with a strong instinct to head straight for the safety of the water. But artificial coastal lighting from hotels, roads and businesses can easily disorient the tiny turtles, steering them away from the water and toward near-certain death. Those that do make it to the open ocean travel the seas for up to 12 years before returning coastward, navigating an obstacle course of shrimp-trawl nets, longline fisheries, dredge projects, marine debris — including plastic smorgasbords they can confuse for food — and oil and gas infrastructure and pollution. The few loggerheads that manage to reach maturity, around 35 years of age, seek out a mate and return to their home beach to nest.

With coastal development threatened by rising seas, some of the turtles’ natal beaches may be cut off by coastal fortifications — or simply gone, thanks to human-accelerated erosion. Females that are able to locate suitable nesting beaches may also be encumbered by other human-caused obstructions, like beach furniture or boardwalks. But females that miraculously make it lay several clutches of eggs in the hope that a few of these will, just as miraculously, reach maturity themselves and be able to perpetuate the cycle of life.

This summer’s massive critical habitat designation will increase awareness of important sea turtle areas and require that federal activities be reviewed to ensure there are no potentially harmful impacts to the turtles’ survival and eventual

“...the largest critical habitat designation *ever*.”

recovery. It will protect continued public access to beaches and make beach-going experiences more enjoyable by keeping them clean and healthy.

The nesting beach critical habitat designation encompasses 84 percent of all known nesting areas, so it will help ensure that there are places for sea turtles to safely lay their eggs and that newly hatched babies have a fighting chance. By identifying the areas most important for nesting sea turtles, it should allow for better planning of coastal activities and better mitigation of impacts to habitat. But the designation does *not* take into account sea-level rise, rising water temperatures, or the need to protect upland and more northerly beaches to accommodate a predicted shift in nesting. It also fails to protect a few critical beaches in Florida where light pollution and beach driving result in the disorientation and potential mortality of thousands of loggerheads every year.

The marine critical habitat designation includes protection for nearshore reproductive, breeding, migratory and winter habitat, as well as *Sargassum* habitat. *Sargassum* is a type of seaweed that provides food, cover and warm water for optimal growth of young loggerheads.

While the ocean habitat rule provides unprecedented habitat protection for loggerhead sea turtles, it only protects nearshore habitat for one mile off nesting beaches for females and hatchlings; meanwhile the science shows us these critters heavily



Loggerhead critical habitat map by Curtis Bradley

use up to three miles. Sadly, the agency also failed to identify and protect critical habitat for endangered Pacific Ocean loggerheads, at risk from Hawaii and California fisheries activities.

The agencies first declared loggerhead sea turtles endangered in 1978, yet never designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. This designation followed a 2013 lawsuit by the Center and our conservation partners against the federal government after it failed to designate important nesting beaches and ocean waters as areas essential for loggerhead recovery. The suit built upon earlier Center work, including petitions dating back to 2002 submitted with partner groups to strengthen protections for loggerhead populations on both coasts.



Taking steps to protect habitat for wildlife keeps it beautiful and intact for all of us to enjoy — and species with designated critical habitat are twice as likely to be recovering than species without it.

Jaclyn Lopez is the Florida director and a staff attorney at the Center. She coordinates campaigns in the Southeast and Caribbean, focusing her work on protecting imperiled species and ecosystems from St. Petersburg, Fla.



Photo by Alejandro Linares Garcia

A New Fight to Save Wolverines

Fish and Wildlife Caves to Political Pressure, Center Fights Back

Fierce, cunning and built for survival on unforgiving mountain landscapes, American wolverines are iconic carnivores that can chase away grizzlies — many times their own size. But these feisty furbearers are now caught up in a fight that even they may not walk away from, which is why we're standing up for them.

Wolverines once roamed a large swath of the mountainous West. But after decades of trapping and habitat loss, fewer than 300 of these intriguing animals remain in the lower 48 states, mostly in the northern Rockies — and now they face a new threat to their survival: global warming, which is melting the snowpack they need to build dens and raise their young. Scientists estimate that over the next 75 years, warming temperatures could rob wolverines of 63 percent of their snowy habitat. It's not hard to imagine what that will do to an animal whose numbers are already precariously low.

Following more than a decade of work by the Center and allies to protect wolverines, in 2013 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists finally proposed Endangered Species Act protections for the species in the lower 48, concluding that the warming climate is threatening them with extinction. The proposal won strong support from five of seven scientific peer reviewers and a nine-person independent science panel.

But it came under strong opposition from several states in the wolverine's range. And the Fish and Wildlife Service caved

to this political pressure, abruptly reversing the recommendations of its own scientists and independent peer reviewers. It withdrew its proposal to protect American wolverines in August.

The reversal was condemned by some of the nation's top wildlife biologists and two scientific societies, who called it "a dangerous precedent."

The decision stands to have tragic consequences for one of the rarest, most climate-imperiled mammals in the lower 48. Endangered Species Act protections would help reduce dangers to the wolverine from trapping, habitat development and human disturbance; it would protect critical habitat areas and give the federal government added tools to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

That's why the Center is fighting back. In August we and our allies notified the Fish and Wildlife Service that we're filing suit to secure protection for the wolverine. We won't let politics undermine science; we'll keep standing up for wolverines to make sure these amazing animals get the protection they need to survive.



Shaye Wolf, the Center's climate science director, works with the Climate Law Institute from San Francisco.

Monarch Butterflies in Deadly Freefall

After 90 Percent Decline, Petition Seeks Federal Protection

Once upon a time in the summer, monarch butterflies were found in backyards across the country. Generations of children learned the wonders of metamorphosis by watching the transformation of fat, black-and-yellow caterpillars first into shiny blue chrysalises, then into large, orange-and-black butterflies.

Monarch caterpillars grow to 2,000 times their starting mass by constantly eating milkweed before suspending themselves from the underside of a leaf and dissolving into "butterfly soup" inside their protective chrysalis case. Within a few weeks the adults emerge, mate and lay eggs, beginning the cycle again. But the adult butterflies must find milkweed on which to deposit their eggs, and milkweed is being driven off the landscape.

Monarchs have declined by 90 percent over the past two decades due largely to milkweed loss caused by widespread planting of genetically engineered, herbicide-resistant corn and soybeans in the Midwest, where most monarchs were once born. Add sprawl and tens of millions of acres of newly developed land, and monarchs have lost a combined area of habitat about the size of Texas.

While early summer monarchs live only a few weeks, the last generation born in late summer lives for nine months and migrates thousands of miles to oyamel fir groves in the mountains of central Mexico to overwinter clustered on trees. These high-elevation forests are threatened by logging and climate change. Though large-scale illegal logging in the Mexican winter range has largely been curtailed, the economy of the region still faces serious challenges that catalyze small-scale illegal logging to cope with poverty.

Global climate change could undermine the monarch migration. The threat from climate change in the monarch's overwintering habitat in Mexico is so dire that — just as Joshua trees will no longer be found in Joshua Tree National Park — monarchs may no longer occur in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve by the end of this century. The monarchs' summer breeding habitat in the United States is also predicted to become too hot in many areas for the animals to be able to reproduce. Severe weather also kills millions of monarchs each year.

Because of these threats, this August the Center, joined by the Center for Food Safety, Xerces Society and renowned

monarch biologist Lincoln Brower petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the monarch as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The monarch was very recently a highly abundant species, and its population crash indicates environmental change on an alarming scale. These beautiful insects' decline, along with the decline of bees, frogs, bats, mollusks and other species, is yet another wakeup call that we're paving and spraying our way to a lonely, less interesting and dangerously less-diverse planet. The monarch needs Endangered Species Act protection sooner rather than later, or we risk witnessing the vanishment, from all of our backyards, of a once-familiar friend.



Photo by Didier Descouens

Tierra Curry, senior scientist at the Center, focuses on the listing and recovery of endangered species and works nationally with individuals and groups in support of the conservation of species and the Endangered Species Act from Portland, Ore.



Lawsuit Challenges U.S. Airstrip in Japan That Would Doom Gentle Giants of the Sea

Along the coast of Japan, amid a wonderland of coral and marine life, the world's last Okinawa dugongs are in a fight for their lives.

These gentle beasts, related to manatees, have survived for centuries in the shallow waters off this Japanese island, where they've become cultural icons for the Okinawan people, believed to ensure abundant food and warn of tsunamis. Growing up to 9 feet long, they have specialized snouts adapted to grazing on seagrass.

But their numbers have dwindled in recent decades, and now the U.S. military — in the latest controversy over the base expansion at Okinawa's Oura Bay, near Nago in northeast Okinawa — is about to hammer the last nail into their coffin.

A plan shelved several years ago to enlarge a U.S. Marine airbase, Camp Schwab, is back on the table. Plans call for paving over the stunning reef, which is home not only to some of the last Okinawa dugong on Earth but also thousands of fish and mollusk species (including at least nine that are endangered).

That's why this summer conservation groups in Japan and the United States — including the Center — filed a lawsuit asking a U.S. federal court in San Francisco to immediately halt construction of the airstrip.

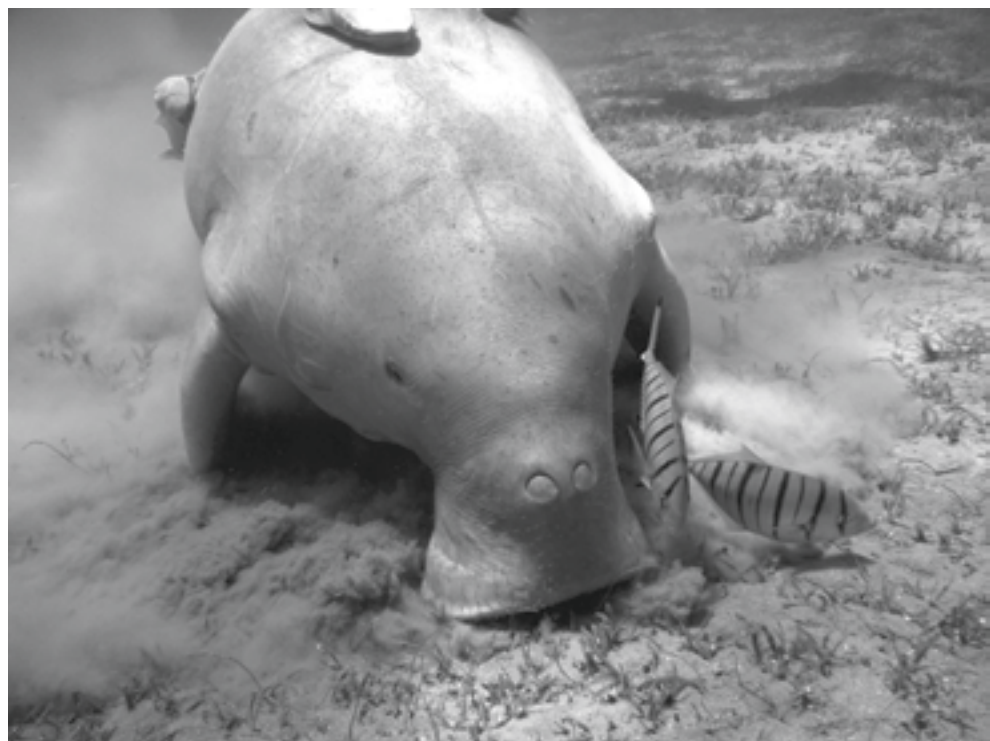
The Center has been fighting for years to protect dugongs from this controversial military base expansion. The Japanese Ministry of the Environment has listed dugongs as "critically endangered," and they are on the U.S. endangered species list.

But unfortunately their declines appear to be ongoing. Though it was estimated in 1997 that as few as 12 to 50 Okinawa dugongs survived, more recent surveys have projected an even lower population.

The Nature Conservation Society of Japan reported earlier this year it had found more than 110 locations around the site of the new airstrips where dugongs had fed on seagrass this spring and summer.

But preliminary construction activities to expand the base have begun.

Our lawsuit seeks to halt those construction activities on



Dugong photo by Julien Willem

the new airstrip until the U.S. Department of Defense conducts a more in-depth analysis of how to avoid or mitigate harm to the dugong. According to our lawsuit, the Defense Department failed to consider all possible effects of the new airstrip and excluded input from the public and local dugong experts before concluding in April that its activities would not harm the animals.

But what needs to be done here has never been in doubt: The DoD must reverse course and cancel this project.

Peter Galvin, a founder of the Center, helps coordinate the Center's legal actions and campaigns, assists in the formulation of organizational policy and strategy, and serves on the Center's leadership team.



The Dancing Birds of the West

In spring, in the last wild sagebrush landscapes of the West, the haunting calls of the greater sage grouse — woop, woop, pop — are an ancient ritual of spring. Males return to the same lek every season, strutting and cooing to the females. But their devotion to those leks also makes them vulnerable when the habitat is destroyed.

In the early 1800s greater sage grouse are believed to have numbered 16 million birds; Lewis and Clark recorded their abundance. By the 1960s Rachel Carson was warning of the birds' possible demise in *Silent Spring*. Efforts to chemically kill vast expanses of native sagebrush to prop up domestic live-stock grazing were poisoning the landscape.

For more than a century, sagebrush has been treated as an enemy to be eradicated — plowed, roaded, fragmented, grazed, subdivided, and more recently drilled and fracked. Important sagebrush habitat is lost each year to uncharacteristic fire, facilitated by cattle grazing that favors highly flammable, invasive cheatgrass.

With just 13 male birds recorded in 2011, greater sage grouse in Alberta are on the brink of extinction. Numbers of Gunnison and bistate distinct populations of sage grouse in the United States are also perilously low. Sagebrush steppe is one of the most imperiled ecosystems in North America; only 3 percent is protected by strong conservation designations. Protecting the greater sage grouse also means helping to protect more than 300 other sensitive species — including pronghorn, pygmy rabbits, elk and golden eagles.

The Center has been working to protect the sage grouse

“As these magnificent birds vanish before our eyes, they take the last great western landscape with them.”

fore more than a decade. In 2011 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it would decide in 2015 whether to protect the birds under the Endangered Species Act. Prompted by this deadline, federal land-management agencies began updating management plans with new measures to conserve sage grouse and potentially preclude listing the species. The Center will be grading each of the final land-management plans as they are released this fall and next spring in our Scorecard (check the website).

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for half of remaining greater sage grouse habitat and is working with the Forest Service on an unprecedented effort to improve management of more than 40 million acres of publicly owned sagebrush in the West. We'll be using best-available science guidelines in the Scorecard to see how those plans shape up, including addressing the threats of oil and gas development.

As these magnificent birds vanish before our eyes, they take the last great western landscape with them. We have the opportunity to stop that — to save the sage grouse from extinction and protect millions of acres of prime wildlife habitat. The fight won't be easy but these birds, and their breathtaking homes, are worth it.

Stay tuned in the coming months for how you can help.

Randi Spivak, public lands director, oversees the Center's Public Lands program from Washington, D.C.



Photo courtesy USFWS

Making History: People's Climate Train, Climate March

I hope that years from now we can look back at September 2014 as a turning point in the climate movement, a moment when people's call for climate action grew so loud that our leaders could no longer ignore them.

It certainly felt that way as we traveled across the country on the People's Climate Train in mid-September en route to the People's Climate March in New York City.

The Climate Train, organized by the Center, was one of the most inspirational events in my time at the Center. More than 170 people joined us on the train, including nuns, ministers, tribal leaders, teachers, students and climate activists from around the country.

We boarded the Amtrak in Emeryville, Calif., on Sept. 15 and spent the next four days moving across the country with whistle-stops in Reno, Denver and Chicago. Along the way, we held workshops, activist trainings and countless discussions about the best ways to tackle the climate crisis.

It was so inspiring to spend the week with so many people focused on such a singular goal in such a positive way. Global leaders have failed to act for years and we understand that action will only be born out of a movement by the people. The climate crisis can be daunting and grim and we took these issues seriously, but the train was also a blast.

We arrived in New York City late on the Thursday night before the People's Climate March in New York on Sunday. There we joined dozens of Center staff, activists and supporters in the largest march in the history of the climate movement.

History was certainly in the air, and so was a palpable feeling that the time has finally come to deal with global warming, to begin making fossil fuels a thing of the past and embrace safer, saner energy policies that will leave a sustainable planet for future generations.

That, of course, starts with rejecting the kinds of dangerous mentality that got us in this mess in the first place, the same mentality that pushes for more fracking, the Keystone XL pipeline, offshore oil and gas development and lax pollution rules on power plants.

We know we have a long way to go, but this fight is the fight of our age. The result will be a livable future for people and wildlife. After the climate train and march in September, it feels like we're a step closer to making that happen.

Thanks to all of you who boarded the People's Climate Train, attended the People's Climate March, held a rally in your own town or supported us in spirit every step of the way.



Photo by Clayton Norman

Valerie Love is the Center's No Tar Sands campaigner in San Francisco. She works to mobilize action against tar sands development and the Keystone XL pipeline.



Obama Must Strengthen Power Plant Rules to Prevent Climate Crisis, Cut Greenhouse Gases

Greenhouse gas pollution is growing so rapidly that the world could soon suffer “severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts,” says a draft version of a terrifying new United Nations report.

If we don't control carbon emissions quickly, the report explains, global warming will disrupt food production, trigger dangerous new levels of sea-level rise, and drive many plants and animals to extinction.

That's why President Barack Obama must strengthen his plan for curbing greenhouse gas emissions from our nation's power plants — the largest source of the pollutants causing global warming.

The president's Clean Power Plan, which was the focus of public hearings around the country this summer, is an important and unprecedented step in the fight against climate change. But the proposed rules just don't do enough, fast enough, to cut planet-warming pollution.

The president's plan aims to reduce existing power plant emissions about 7.7 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. Yet scientists have warned that developed countries like the United States must cut pollution far more — 25 percent to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

Unfortunately the Environmental Protection Agency's recent proposal to regulate carbon pollution from new power plants is even weaker. Plants built over the next decade or so would be likely to meet these standards even if the proposed rule didn't exist.

That's in part because fracking's rapid spread across America has made natural gas so cheap that new coal plants are rarely built. All but the worst existing natural gas plants already meet the targets — and the proposed standard won't require new

gas plants to be more efficient than all but the most polluting existing plants.

Instead of building a pathway that decreases energy generation from fossil fuels, these proposals would actually increase the use of natural gas.

But research increasingly shows that natural gas production and transmission leaks so much methane — a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide — that the dangers to the climate from this much-hyped “clean” energy source could approach those of coal.

The rule also contains loopholes that will leave many other significant sources of greenhouse gases — including biomass-burning power plants — entirely uncontrolled.

And the plan dangerously delays implementation of the new standards. To avoid the worst effects of climate chaos, global emissions must peak this decade and continue to decline very sharply thereafter. Scheduling full compliance with emissions targets 16 years from now is simply unacceptable.

With our planet facing temperature increases that will transform entire ecosystems and put millions of people in harm's way, as well as an untold number of wildlife species, President Obama must strengthen these rules to achieve the pollution cuts we need for a livable future.

Vera Pardee, a senior attorney, works with the Climate Law Institute in San Francisco.





Hawaiian monk seal courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Mark Sullivan

Protecting Alaska’s Ancient Cedars

Yellow cedars are beautiful, long-lived conifers native to Alaska. But over the past century, more than 70 percent of them have died in many parts of this vast state as climate change has melted the snow that protects their fragile roots from freezing air in winter. And since these ancient trees hold massive amounts of carbon dioxide — which means they’ve been helping keep climate change in check even as it has ravaged their population — the yellow cedar’s decline is yet another illustration of climate change’s snowball effect. Precious to Alaska natives (people, Sitka deer and brown bears alike), yellow cedar, if lost, would leave a gaping hole in the extraordinary rainforests of coastal Alaska and British Columbia.

That’s why, in June, the Center petitioned for Endangered Species Act protection for yellow cedars. If approved it would be the first Alaska tree species, and only the second plant in the state, protected by the Act. Along with carbon emissions cuts, Endangered Species Act

protection is one of the best hopes for survival for these magnificent trees.

First-ever Plastic-pollution Superfund Site One Step Closer

In September the Environmental Protection Agency, responding to a 2012 Superfund petition from the Center, released an assessment documenting the hazard posed by plastic pollution to wildlife on Tern Island in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands — a key finding that brings the island closer to being designated as a Superfund site, an area of toxic hazard singled out for federal cleanup. This is the first time in history the agency has considered using the Superfund program to address an area contaminated by plastic.

Tern Island and its surrounding atoll is critical habitat for endangered Hawaiian monk seals and plays a vital role as nesting habitat for 95 percent of threatened Hawaiian green sea turtles. It’s also a key breeding site for 18 species of seabirds.

Settlement Reached to Protect Wildlife From Five Pesticides

In July the Center reached a settlement that requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to analyze the impacts of five common pesticides on endangered wildlife across the country. The pesticides up for review — carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, diazinon, malathion and methomyl — have all proved toxic to wildlife and may pose a health risk to people.

The Center previously sued the EPA for failing to consult over the impacts of these and other pesticides on endangered California red-legged frogs; we obtained an injunction in 2006 imposing restrictions on pesticide use until the consultation was completed. To date those consultations have not been completed. In 2013 the Center again sued, seeking completion of consultation. In the new settlement the Fish and Wildlife Service resolved that litigation by agreeing to complete consultation and produce the required “biological opinions” in under five years. As part of the agreement, the agency will consider the pesticides’ impacts not only on red-legged frogs but on all endangered species across the country. The analysis is likely to lead to permanent restrictions on some of the most harmful uses of these highly toxic compounds.

“We don’t think these chemicals should even be in use, but at the very least, measures to protect endangered wildlife should have been put in place when these chemicals were first approved,” said Collette Adkins Giese, an attorney at the Center. “We hope the analysis required by this agreement will finally reduce the use of toxic pesticides in the habitats of our country’s most vulnerable wildlife.”



“I give as much as I can every year to the Center, because the environment needs my help now. But it’s good to know that even after I’m gone, I’ll still be helping to protect our wild places and creatures. How? I’ve made the Center part of my family by providing for them in my Will.”

— BILL COLLINS, OWLS CLUB CHAIR, CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Photo by Mary Keitleman

Protect Tomorrow’s Wildlife and Wild Places Today: Join the Owls Club

Owls — ancient symbols of wisdom, helpfulness and protection — have long been among the vast suite of species we are fighting to save. Joining the Owls Club and making a planned gift to the Center, such as a bequest, a charitable trust, a gift of insurance or a pension, helps ensure the future of one of the most widely recognized and effective species and habitat protection organizations in the world.

By naming the Center in your will, or making the Center a beneficiary to your retirement plan or other estate plan, you can help us continue our superb work fighting for the iconic wildlife, trees and landscapes we love — not just for our lifetimes, but for generations to come. These gifts are designed to help **you and your family** as well as the Center. Please call to get more information.

To request a free information packet, please call Director of Development Paula Simmonds at (646) 770-7206 or email psimmonds@biologicaldiversity.org.

To view our planned giving information online, visit: BiologicalDiversity.org/owlclub.





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Necessary Disobedience

From the Director

Kierán Suckling

On Sept. 22, 2014 I spent a night in a

New York City jail with Frostpaw the Polar Bear for engaging in civil disobedience.

With my colleague and cofounder Peter Galvin in the polar bear suit, and hundreds of other protesters alongside, I'd helped block hedge-fund managers and stock traders from plying their climate-destroying trade in an action called Flood Wall Street — a followup to the previous day's People's Climate March. The march drew more than 400,000 people, the largest climate change protest in history, including more than 150 who traveled to the city on the Center's People's Climate Train.

Frostpaw and I joined the sit-in because carbon pollution and carbon profits are killing the planet — baking the Earth, acidifying the oceans, destroying human communities and driving species extinct. We were willing to be arrested because we need to stand up *now* to the coal, oil, gas, transportation and agribusiness lobbyists who block desperately needed action to stop greenhouse gas pollution.

Our arrest was broadcast live to millions of Americans and brought worldwide attention to the protest, global warming and Wall Street's blocking of climate action. Frostpaw's face, and his message, made the front page in newspapers from New York to Dallas to France and India. National and international TV news programs interviewed him as he calmly explained why not just polar bears but people need fast, powerful action on carbon emissions.

And a night in jail is a minor inconvenience compared to the pain of villages overwhelmed by rising oceans; farmers ravaged by drought; hundreds of thousands forced to migrate by lack of water and destroyed infrastructure; and billions lacking the resources to deal with a dangerously heating, unstable climate. It's certainly a minor inconvenience compared to the life-threatening impacts of climate change on polar bears, wolverines, sea turtles and corals.

Silence and inaction may well be the only things more dangerous than carbon emissions to life on Earth.

Endangered earth

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Cover photo by
Igor Shpilenok

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