

# Endangered earth

Fall 2015



**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**, 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** for ringtones with descriptions in Spanish.)

African Elephant by Peter Steward CC-BY-NC



Endangered Species • Elephants  
by Tara Easter

# Elephant ~~E~~xtinction

## The Fight To Protect Elephants, Stem Ivory Trade

The drumming and yelling that warned neighbors of the presence of elephants had stopped. In the silence we could hear the distant snapping of branches. We positioned ourselves downwind from the waterhole, near the protective fires that bordered nearby fields, and quietly waited, scanning the dark landscape for movement.

Slowly, eight enormous figures sauntered into the moonlight and approached the waterhole single-file.

*Ndovu.*

We watched as two elephant bulls sparred playfully while the others sucked up water with their trunks. Eventually all the elephants disappeared into the bush, heading back toward Tsavo East National Park. It had been my first elephant sighting in the month I'd been in Kenya; I was there helping to build a new research center and working with local farmers to maintain beehive fences used to deter elephants from their fields. I was elated. Over the next few months, trips into the national park would reward me with many more sightings of these magnificent animals. I'd learn how to recognize individuals and read behaviors, observing familial bonds that reminded me of my own.

Unfortunately, I fear future generations may not have the chance — that the word *ndovu*, Swahili for elephant, may be spoken less and less as time goes on.

For the second time in the last half-century, widespread ivory poaching is pushing elephants toward extinction. Forty years ago more than 1 million elephants roamed sub-Saharan Africa. Now poaching, along with habitat loss, human-elephant conflict and political turmoil, has cut that number in half.

What's more, we run the risk of losing an entire species before it's even officially recognized. Genetic analyses show there are actually two separate species of African elephants. The forest elephants of Central and West Africa diverged from savannah elephants around 5 million years ago — about as long ago as Asian elephants diverged from mammoths. But international agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classify them as one species. While the savannah elephants of southern Africa were kept relatively safe, the thick upland forest hid the devastation of forest elephants from public view. Recent population surveys now reveal stark declines in both species. Political conflict in Central Africa exacerbates the poaching crisis for forest elephants, which have declined by 65 percent in the past decade. And as

syndicates spread east and south, former beacons of hope for elephants now struggle to keep a remaining few. In Tanzania savannah elephant populations fell by over 60 percent in just five years.

The rise of a middle class in China and other Southeast Asian countries has fueled a burgeoning trade in precious wildlife products like ivory. Yet the United States maintains the world's second-largest market for ivory products. And as one of the world's most important economies, it's in a unique position to play a vital role in saving elephants. That's why, earlier this year, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a petition to reclassify African elephants as two species and to uplist both to "endangered" status under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Right now African elephants are listed under the less protective "threatened" status, allowing limited ivory trade. The Obama administration has taken big strides to purge the ivory trade domestically, but given the scale of the crisis and the possibility of extinction in our lifetime, both elephant species warrant the strongest possible action. An "endangered" classification would virtually eliminate the remaining U.S. ivory trade and elevate the status of each species — driving increases in funding for conservation and research.

Even in protected areas like Tsavo National Park, it's clear the elephants need all the help they can get from those countries sustaining this illicit and brutal trade. That night at the waterhole I was thankful to see that the sparring bulls each sported beautiful sets of long tusks. But with every new report of an elephant family that has been shot down in Tsavo, I have to wonder if those first mischievous visitors have survived.



*Tara Easter is a Center scientist working to protect endangered species through research, petitions, comments and advocacy.*



# Victory: California Bans Bobcat Trapping

In January 2013 a longtime resident on the border of California's Joshua Tree National Park uncovered a bobcat trap camouflaged on his property. The discovery outraged locals who'd been baffled by the abrupt disappearance of these beautiful and elusive creatures passing through their lives.

It was later revealed that trappers had killed at least 45 bobcats on the boundaries of the park that season, largely depleting the local population of bobcat families for the purpose of selling their pelts on Chinese and Russian fur markets. A single bobcat pelt goes for an average of \$390, though the price tag can reach into the thousands. Devastatingly, the trappers' actions were perfectly legal under California's antiquated trapping laws.

The Joshua Tree events sparked what would become an epic, two-and-a-half year journey for the Center and our allies — involving grassroots organizing, legislation and administrative hearings — to win, in August 2015, a ban on all commercial bobcat trapping across California.

We worked with Assemblyman Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica) and allies to introduce and pass the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013, prohibiting bobcat trapping on private land and along the borders of national and state parks and other protected areas. However, despite the original intent of the bill, California's legislators stopped short of enacting a statewide trapping ban.

Instead they punted the details of the bill's implementation to the state's Fish and Game Commission, which faced the choice of adopting one of two options: a statewide trapping ban or a delineation of no-trapping zones that still permitted trapping in areas with traditionally high trapping rates. The Center and allies activated local networks across the state to offer hundreds of public testimonies, and more than 25,000 letters, in support of

the statewide ban over the course of the state commission's nine-month rulemaking process.

The Center entered that process with a legal argument that choosing the zonal trapping program would violate a requirement that trappers bear the cost of that program. We showed that it would be financially infeasible for them to bear that true cost — thus adopting the zonal approach would be illegal. And the commission voted 3–2 to ban the commercial trapping of bobcats across the state.

The ban embodies the fact that Californians value their wildlife more alive than dead — as living and active parts of the natural world, not as objects to be killed and skinned for the sake of foreign fashion markets. While the commission and Department of Fish and Wildlife have long tailored their management to the needs of “consumptive users” who “harvest” wildlife, we're witnessing a generational shift in which “non-consumptive” users are asserting their beliefs and raising their voices at the podium. And on behalf of bobcats, they were heard.



*Jean Su is a staff attorney who works with the Center's Strategic Litigation Group.*

Bobcat by Eugene Beckes CC-BY-NC-SA







Monk seal by Brian Russo CC-BY

## A Place to Call Home: Hawaiian Monk Seals Win Habitat Protections

**H**awaiian monk seals — for which the Center and our partners have been fighting for more than 15 years — are among the world’s most endangered marine mammals. Only two kinds of mammals are endemic to Hawaii (meaning they’re native there and live nowhere else): monk seals and Hawaiian hoary bats. The monk seals are perilously close to extinction, with only about 1,100 individuals left in the world and a population declining by about 3 percent annually.

And now, since September, the seals are enjoying crucial new habitat protections — a sweeping victory for the conservation of Hawaii’s beleaguered wild creatures.

The National Marine Fisheries Service designated 6,712 square miles as critical habitat for these seals — an animal known to native Hawaiians as *ilio-holo-i-ka-uaua*, or “the dog that runs in rough water.” The protected lands include beaches and near-shore areas on Kauai, Oahu, Maui Nui and the Big Island, as well as areas in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

The critical habitat designation came in response to a scientific petition from the Center, KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, and the Ocean Conservancy. Our petition sought habitat protections to address rising seas and the changing geography of the seals, as they increasingly give birth to healthy pups in the main Hawaiian Islands.

There’s strong support for the habitat protections. A poll of Hawaii voters, commissioned by the Center after the ruling, found that 81 percent support the seals’ critical habitat and 93 percent say it’s important to save them from extinction — support for the seals that cuts across all demographic groups. The state government also came out in favor of the rule.

“Critical habitat designation is an important tool in the larger effort to recover this valued native species, found nowhere else in the world,” said Department of Land and Natural Resources Chairperson Suzanne Case.

Species that are given “critical habitat” under the Endangered Species Act are twice as likely to be on the path to recovery as those without habitat protections; protected habitat on the main islands offers the best chance for monk seals to recover. The new protections regulate government activities such as military training, coastal development permits and water pollution permits. And federal agencies must consult with biologists before they can issue permits for or fund activities that will destroy or “adversely modify” — that is, damage — essential monk seal habitat.

That means cleaner, healthier beaches for all of us — and a real opportunity for long-suffering Hawaiian monk seals to avoid the tragedy of extinction and continue to live, as they have for so many generations, in and around the beautiful islands of Hawaii for generations to come.

*Miyoko Sakashita is the Center’s oceans director. She works with the oceans team to secure protections for imperiled marine life and ecosystems from threats ranging from global warming and ocean acidification to fisheries and pollution.*





# In the Blast Zone

A new analysis by the Center for Biological Diversity found that more than 1 million California children attend school within 1 mile of railroads used by oil trains, which have experienced a dramatic increase in explosions and derailments across the country in recent years.

The investigation identified more than 2,300 elementary, middle and high schools in 29 counties located within a mile of confirmed oil train routes in California.

The analysis used oil train routes identified through government documents and media reports and the latest data available from U.S. Department of Education (2009-2010 and 2011-2012) to map public and private elementary, middle and high schools along the routes and calculate the number of students.

The U.S. Department of Transportation recommends an initial evacuation zone of a half-mile in all directions for a single tanker car on fire. However, a one-mile-or-more evacuation zone can result when there are explosions and fires involving multiple tanker cars, which can produce extensive plumes of toxic fumes, smoke, particulate matter and heat at significant distances from burning oil tankers.

Among the findings in the mapping analysis:

- More than 1 million (approximately 1,178,000) California students attend school within a mile of confirmed oil train routes.
- Of those, roughly 521,000 go to school within a half-mile of oil train routes, the area that federal officials say should be initially evacuated in all directions in case of a single tanker on fire.
- Another 226,000 attend school within a mile of proposed oil train routes.

The map is a powerful tool in the Center's work to protect people and wildlife from oil trains in California and around the country. Find out more at [BiologicalDiversity.org/blastzone](http://BiologicalDiversity.org/blastzone)



Photo by Wendilia Dunlap; map by Curt Bradley







# Keep It in the Ground: Historic Campaign Launched to Stop New Fossil Fuel Leases on Public Lands, Oceans

Marking a long-overdue paradigm shift in the environmental movement, the Center this summer launched a historic campaign to phase out fossil fuel development on public lands and oceans in the United States.

In July we released a landmark report titled *The Potential Greenhouse Gas Emissions of U.S. Federal Fossil Fuels*. Written by our partners at EcoShift Consulting for the Center and Friends of the Earth, it's a first-ever estimate of the volume and potential greenhouse gas emissions of publicly owned fossil fuels in the United States.

The numbers are powerful: Nearly half the potential emissions from all remaining fossil fuels in this country — up to 450 billion tons — are from publicly owned federal fossil fuels. An area 55 times larger than Grand Canyon National Park — 67 million acres — is already leased to industry, containing up to 43 billion tons of potential carbon pollution; the so-far-unleased 450 billion tons are incompatible with any U.S. share of global carbon limits to prevent climate disaster.

In September, more than 400 organizations and labor, faith, indigenous and community leaders called on President Obama to end new fossil fuel leasing on federal lands and in the ocean. The call touched down at an energetic rally in front of the White House, after which members of the massive “Keep it in the Ground” coalition — an envoy of leaders from Alaska to Florida fighting federal fossil fuel development — delivered the coalition's letter to senior administration officials.

The campaign stands on a critical factual and legal foundation articulated by Center activists and attorneys: that the president of the United States, either President Obama or

a future president, has the clear statutory authority to keep up to 450 billion tons from the global pool of potential carbon pollution. We detailed that authority in a second Center report called *Grounded: The President's Power to Fight Climate Change, Protect Public Lands by Keeping Publicly Owned Fossil Fuels in the Ground*.

Measured by tons of climate pollution taken off the table, deeming unleased federal oil, gas and coal “unburnable” would be the largest single action ever taken by a U.S. president to fight climate change.

Over the coming year we'll be expanding the already massive support for this historic change while launching new legal challenges, public petitions and protests — and ratcheting up regional public lands fossil fuels campaigns with the climate urgency they deserve.

The global fight to keep carbon in the ground needs to start now, on our public lands and ocean floors. This movement will bring that revolution.

*Taylor McKinnon is the Center's public lands campaigner. He works to protect public lands and endangered species in the western United States and focuses on curbing fossil fuel development on public lands.*







## Politics of Extinction: Report Finds 600% Increase in Attacks on Endangered Species

**T**he stats are clear: In recent years the number of Republican-led legislative attacks on endangered species and the Endangered Species Act have increased by 600 percent.

Back in July the Center released a report documenting our extensive, comprehensive review of all legislative proposals and riders coming from Congress within the past 20 years (1996–2015) seeking to remove protections from endangered species or weaken how the Act operates. The report, *The Politics of Extinction*, revealed that since 2011, after the infamous *Citizens United* ruling, congressional Republicans have orchestrated more than 164 attacks on imperiled wildlife and the Act at an average of 33 attacks per year. This stands in stark contrast with the previous 15 years (1996–2010), which bore witness to a mere 69 attacks, at an average of five attacks per year. The current 114th Congress has already proposed at least 66 attacks, with more expected through the end of the year. Overall, Republicans are responsible for 93 percent of the attacks within the 20-year period and 100 percent of the record-breaking number of attacks this year.

The Center's report also identifies the “top five” members of Congress who have been responsible for nearly a quarter of the legislative attacks: Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah). Collectively these members have also received nearly \$8 million in campaign donations from the agribusiness and oil and gas industries.

This significant increase in anti-species legislation

corresponds to a massive increase in campaign contributions from special-interest industries, including fossil fuels and agriculture, that oppose endangered species protections. Between 2004 and 2014, for example, campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry increased from roughly \$10 million to more than \$25 million. As one would predict, many of the attacks targeted species like the gray wolf, American burying beetle and lesser prairie chicken — animals that stand directly in the way of fuel extraction and ranching activities. This year's appropriations bill contains a rider that would strip protections from gray wolves throughout the Great Lakes region.

While most of these legislative proposals will not make it into law, Republicans are still succeeding in intimidating the agencies charged with implementing the Act from going forth efficiently with species listings and enforcing prohibitions against killing, hurting or harassing the animals. In some cases their intimidation has even resulted in the removal of protections from species. As long as the crusade against the Endangered Species Act continues, the Center will be on the front lines defending this vital wildlife law.

*Jamie Pang is the Endangered Species Act campaigner at the Center.*







## THE ONLY KNOWN JAGUAR IN THE U.S.

Since 2012 a wild male jaguar (above) has been photographed hundreds of times by trail cameras in the Santa Rita Mountains, less than 30 miles from downtown Tucson, Ariz. where the Center is headquartered. Although there may be others in the region (several have been seen and photographed in the past 20 years), he is the only confirmed wild jaguar currently living in the United States. Following decades of legal work by the Center, jaguars were protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1996. In 2014 the Center won 764,207 acres of protected critical habitat for the big cats in southern Arizona and New Mexico. But there's much more to be done to ensure jaguars are able to thrive in the mountains and canyonlands of the American Southwest.



October 25, 2012



September 11, 2013



January 16, 2014



June 4, 2015

# The Fight To Save Jaguars

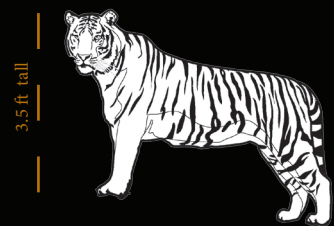
## HOW BIG ARE JAGUARS?

The jaguar is the third-largest cat in the world after the African lion and the Bengal tiger.

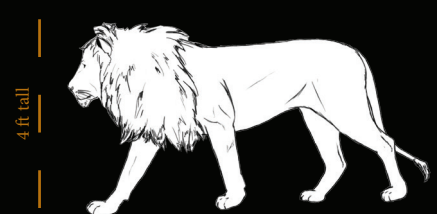
Jaguar 5.5 ft. long



Bengal Tiger 6.5 ft. long

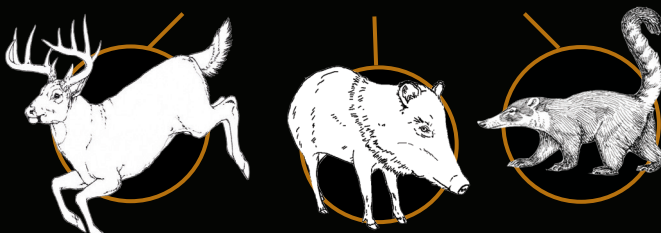


African Lion 8 ft. long



## WHAT DO JAGUARS EAT IN ARIZONA?

Jaguars, like all wild cats, are carnivores. They are also dietary generalists. In Arizona they eat from a large menu that includes mostly deer and javelina, but also coati, skunks, raccoons, frogs, birds and other animals.



FIND OUT MORE AT

[ProtectOurJaguars.org](http://ProtectOurJaguars.org)





Photo © Don Getty

## First Wolf Pack in California in Nearly 100 Years

For the first time in almost a century, a family of gray wolves is living wild in California. In remote Siskiyou County, a trail camera has captured a series of photographs of both the adult wolves and the black pups.

The two adult, black-furred wolves and five 4-month-old pups have been named the Shasta pack, after the area's spectacular volcano.

Thanks to foresight and pressure from the Center and our allies that resulted in state action in 2014, these wolves have the benefit of legal protection under California's Endangered Species Act. According to state biologists, one or more of the animals will soon be radio-collared for monitoring; in the meantime, their black color should make it virtually impossible for any hunters to claim to mistake them for coyotes.

## Victory: Shell Leaves Offshore Drilling in Alaska's Arctic

Royal Dutch Shell announced this September that it's ending its Arctic offshore oil exploration "for the

foreseeable future" after failing to strike oil at its Burger Prospect site in Alaska's Chukchi Sea. The Center, allies and Americans around the country have fought for years against Arctic Ocean drilling, where an oil spill would be impossible to clean up. It's a sweet victory.

## Fight To Save Sacred Oak Flat Takes Center Stage

The powerful grassroots movement to save Arizona's Oak Flat — a sacred site of the San Carlos Apache — traveled to Washington, D.C., this summer with an unmistakable message: This land, sacred to native people for generations, should not be desecrated by a massive copper mine.

Members of the Apache Stronghold travelled across the country to gather support from tribes and others who oppose a congressional rider, added to a defense spending bill passed in December, that traded away Oak Flat to foreign mining giant Rio Tinto. They held a rally at the U.S. Capitol. The protest featured drumming, singing and speeches from tribal leaders and supporters — including Congressman Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), who has introduced a bill to repeal the rider and save Oak Flat. The caravan made a splash, with support from the Center, in media headlines across the nation. Center Executive Director Kierán

Suckling was even able to get members of the Apache Stronghold on stage at several Neil Young concerts this summer.

## Center Opens Mexico Office


The Center opened an office in Mexico in August to help save endangered sea turtles, porpoises and other wildlife from extinction. The office is the Center's first outside the United States.

"Mexico is home to a stunning array of wildlife, and far too many of these animals face the prospect of disappearing forever," said Kierán Suckling, executive director of the Center. "We're at a critical moment in the fight to save endangered species and wild places in the United States and beyond. Having a Center representative on the ground in Mexico, advocating for species every day, will give us exciting new opportunities to prevent the tragedy of extinction."

The Center's Mexico office will build on our existing work to conserve Mexican wildlife. For years the Center has sought the protection of cross-border species like Mexican wolves and jaguars, as well as condors and black-footed ferrets. The Center is also working to save the critically endangered vaquita porpoise, a species with only about 50 animals remaining, from fishing nets in the Gulf of California, and has advocated to stop the massive bycatch of endangered loggerhead sea turtles off Baja California Sur through pressure both in Mexico and in the United States.

"I'm thrilled to be joining an organization with an unparalleled record of protecting species and the places they live," said Alex Olivera, the Center's Mexico representative. "Mexico is my home, and the wildlife here — from jaguars in the north to vaquita in the Gulf of California — are an essential part of what makes this place so vital and special. We've got work to do, though, to ensure they survive for generations to come."





“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

## 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 Chief Development Officer Paula Simmonds at (646) 770-7206 or email [psimmonds@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:psimmonds@biologicaldiversity.org).

To view our planned giving information online, visit [BiologicalDiversity.org/owlsclub](http://BiologicalDiversity.org/owlsclub).







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# Expanding Our Vision

From the Director

*Kieran Suckling*

## The Center had modest beginnings in rural

New Mexico —back then our office was wherever we could lay down our sleeping bags or rig up a solar-powered fax machine. Today we number more than 100 full-time staff all over the country; we're engaged in the most important regional and national fights to save endangered species and wild places, curb the climate crisis, and push for population and consumption practices that will give our children a livable world.

For years we've led targeted campaigns beyond U.S. borders, including efforts to protect penguins (seven species of which have gained Endangered Species Act protection because of our petitions and suits), the Okinawa dugong, and even the awesome biodiversity of Australia's famous Great Barrier Reef. This summer we also took on the fight to save elephants in Africa, with a groundbreaking petition to recognize that continent's elephants, beset by the tragedy of ivory poaching, as two species and protect them both under the Endangered Species Act. Our work was featured in a full-page ad in an insert into *USA Today*. And just a short time before this newsletter went out, we got news of 23 animal and plant species protected in the Mariana

Islands, including bats, a skink, two butterfly species, a damselfly, four species of snails and 14 plants.

In August we moved to expand our international work by opening our first office in another country — in La Paz, Mexico. It's an extraordinarily culturally and biologically diverse land, linking the temperate and desert biomes of the United States to the tropical ecosystems of Central and South America. The economy is growing by leaps and bounds, yet Mexico still possesses vast reaches of wild or lightly developed lands urgently in need of protection; its coastlines, too, are crucial habitat for wildlife. Its growing middle class, rural communities and indigenous peoples are very interested in protecting Mexico's unique wildlife and wild places.

From our Mexico office, biologist Alex Olivera is already working to save the world's most critically endangered porpoises — called vaquitas — as well as sea turtles and other rare and vanishing marine animals.

We're excited about reaching new species in new places on our global voyage toward curbing the extinction crisis. And I'm so grateful to you, our members, for undertaking that journey with us.

## Endangered earth

is the membership newsletter of the Center for Biological Diversity. With the support of more than 900,000 members and supporters, the Center works through science, law and creative media to secure a future for all species, great or small, hovering on the brink of extinction. *Endangered Earth* is published three times yearly in January, July and October and printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with solvent-free vegetable-based inks.

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CENTER for BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

*Because life is good.*