



Web Site Offers Endangered Species Ringtones to Raise Awareness

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By Hannah Sentenac

NEW YORK — Looking to get in touch with Mother Nature?

Now you can download the call of the wild, straight to your cell phone.

One Web site is offering ringtones that feature the authentic screeches, howls, and songs of various endangered animals.

Free of charge, you can hear the sounds of the Rufescent Screech-owl, the Yosemite toad, the Blue-throated Macaw, or the Orca whale every time your phone rings.

Rareearthtones.org was designed by the Center for Biological Diversity, a non-profit group with over 30,000 members that has been working to protect endangered species and wild places since 1989.

According to the Peter Galvin, the Conservation Director for the center, the response has been great since the ringtone program was launched on December 18th.

"So far, the sounds are being downloaded at the rate of about 700 per day, and the number of total downloads just hit 10,000. The orca whale is our most popular," said Galvin.

The ringtones are all free, the site only requires that users enter a name and e-mail address in order to access the downloads. Over 40 ringtones are offered from various species, including frogs, owls, whales, and birds.

Some of the sounds are extremely rare, and most were obtained through researchers who work with the center.

"Blakiston's Fish owl is one of rarest birds in world, and we were told researchers had to venture deep into forest in the middle of winter in East Asia to make these recordings," said Galvin. "With some of these calls there are very few recordings that are available anywhere else or that have ever been reported."

More sounds are in the process of being added, including a polar bear and a grey wolf, said Galvin.

"The goal is to get people talking about and learning more about endangered species. Some of the sounds are so unusual that when people hear the phones ring, they're bound to ask, what is that? That's what we want."

Fact sheets on each animal are available on the site, and the center wants people to download them and spread them around.

"Right now our global environment is under assault from habitat loss, global warming, and a variety of other threats. We're working as hard as we can to reverse that, but you have to start branching out and reach people in different ways," said Gavin.

"Who knows, maybe tomorrow's senator will have downloaded an orca ringtone from our Web site."