



ENDANGERED

EARTH

CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

SUMMER 2019

WHERE WE'RE WORKING

January – May 2019

ALASKA DRILLING

The Center and allies sued the Trump administration in March for approving ConocoPhillips's oil-drilling program in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. The drilling would damage some of the world's most important migratory bird habitat and harm the home of the Teshekpuk caribou herd — critical to the Iñupiat people of Nuiqsut.

ORCAS

We secured an important legal victory in April requiring the National Marine Fisheries Service to finally act on our 2014 petition to protect more habitat for endangered West Coast orcas.

HUMBOLDT MARTENS

Although California declared Humboldt martens “endangered” after a Center lawsuit, the state may let a timber company raze their habitat. So we've filed suit again to protect the fewer than 200 of these furry creatures that are left in the state.

NEVADA WILDFLOWERS

The Center is seeking federal protection for two rare flowering plants near Las Vegas — the Las Vegas bear poppy and white-margined beardtongue — at risk from mining, off-road vehicles, cattle grazing and sprawl.

BORDER WALL

Less than a day after President Trump signed a “national emergency” declaration to seize border-wall funding, the Center and allies took him to court. The wall would be a disaster for communities and wildlife along the border, including some of our country's most endangered species — Mexican gray wolves, jaguars and ocelots.

VAQUITAS

According to scientists only 10 vaquita porpoises likely remain in the world. We're calling on Mexico's president to end all gillnet fishing and adopt a “zero tolerance” policy of enforcement in the vaquita's last habitat.

ARCTIC SEALS

We took legal action in March against the Trump administration to protect habitat for two ice-seal species in Alaska whose sea-ice homes are melting.

TEXAS SALAMANDERS

The Center and allies took legal action in February against the Texas Department of Transportation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over a highway project's threats to the endangered Austin blind and Barton Springs salamanders.

CARIBOU

Southern Mountain caribou used to migrate between British Columbia and Idaho, but in 2018 the last individuals in the United States were brought into captivity in Canada. In February we launched a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for

- failing to protect the species. If we can win Endangered Species Act protection, we may be able to bring them back.

WOLVES

The Center's Ignite Change activist network kicked into high gear after the Trump administration rolled out its official plan to strip protection from nearly every wolf in the lower 48. Our activists organized hundreds of Wild for Wolves events across the country, from California to the White House and around the Great Lakes.

SEISMIC BLASTING

We took legal action to block the start of harmful seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean, a precursor to offshore drilling, until the case can be fully heard in court.

PESTICIDES AND INSECT DECLINE

More than 40 percent of insects worldwide are on a fast track to extinction. To help reverse that dangerous trajectory, we're fighting widespread use of harmful synthetic pesticides and fertilizers like dicamba.

GULF COAST SOLITARY BEE

We petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in March to give Endangered Species Act protection to the Gulf Coast solitary bee. In the past decade, this increasingly rare native bee has been documented at only six locations along the coastal dunes and barrier islands of Florida's northern Gulf Coast.

About this map: Streams and rivers of North America by Robert Szucs/Grasshopper Geography

IMPERILED INSECTS

When we think about climate change, we don't often think about bee extinction. Yet climate change may be the single biggest threat to the survival of one bee species: Gulf Coast solitary bees. These native bees live the ultimate beach life, on coastal dunes covered in the yellow flowers of their host plant. Once found along the northern Gulf Coast shoreline, they've been driven to the brink of extinction by habitat destruction. Only 47 individuals have been seen, at six sites in Florida, since 2012. Sea-level rise and storm surges are destroying and flooding what's left of these fuzzy bees' dune habitat. Also, mosquito- and bee-killing pesticides are sprayed more frequently after storms, often in September and October — right when the bees are active. So the Center petitioned for their Endangered Species Act protection on March 27.

The plight of the bees bespeaks a wider trend. Insects are in trouble. From native bees to butterflies, fireflies to dragonflies, insects are threatened by habitat loss, pesticides, climate change, and humans' lack of action to protect them. About 40 percent of insect species are declining — twice as quickly as vertebrate animals. Studies from Germany and Puerto Rico show that insects' collective weight, worldwide, has declined by more than 75 percent in the past 30 years. Butterflies and dung beetles — groups more often studied than others — are declining by 2 percent per year, while 1 in 6 bee species is regionally extinct.

The loss of insects is a growing crisis for people: These creatures play major roles in keeping us, and our ecosystems, healthy. Insects pollinate up to 75 percent of crops and more than 80 percent of flowering plants. They also cycle nutrients, aerate soil, eat other bugs, decompose dead organisms, and feed birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish. If they vanish, life as we know it will no longer be possible.

Agricultural intensification is also a major driver of insect declines. As large swaths of land are converted to monoculture by removing habitat — such as host plants for caterpillars, and flowers for bees — the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides pollutes what habitat is left and poisons all insects. Increasingly often, toxic pesticides are used systemically — put into seeds and distributed into leaves, pollen and nectar as the plants grow. Some, like neonicotinoids, are highly water soluble, transported through water and remaining in soil for years.

Saving insects will require growing our food with fewer chemicals, more habitat conservation, and stronger species protections — transformations that will benefit all life on Earth.

By seeking Endangered Species Act protection and fighting dangerous pesticide use and policy, the Center is working to reverse the alarming trend in insect losses.



Tara Cornelisse • Senior Scientist
Environmental Health Program

FREEING WHALES

How We Made California's Coast Safer for Whales



It began with data: Federal records the Center requested in 2015 showed more and more whales getting tangled up in crab gear along California's coast. The ropes cut into their flesh, hurting them and sometimes killing them as they drowned or starved.

It ended with a legal settlement this April. Our agreement will shorten the commercial crab season to avoid whale migration in springtime. It should also increase the use of ropeless fishing gear, among other reforms.

The story of this successful campaign to make California's commercial Dungeness crab fishery less dangerous to whales and sea turtles shows how a strategy combining legal, political and media action can bring about meaningful change. First we needed to put whale entanglements on the public agenda. So we publicized the fact that those deadly encounters were on the rise, with 30 West Coast entanglements reported in 2014. That was triple the annual average of the decade before. We also notified the California Department of Fish and Wildlife that the entanglement of humpback whales and other wildlife in its crab fishery violated federal law, hurting individual animals and impeding the recovery of imperiled species. That led the state to form a working group to address the problem, which we joined. But, frustrated by the working group's focus on voluntary measures and a lack of meaningful change, we kept up our own media campaign. Our work got the issue covered by every major California newspaper.

In spring 2016 a new whale entanglement was reported almost every day in biologically rich Monterey Bay. The state wildlife department asked crabbers to get their gear out of the water, but it didn't enact any mandatory measures. Entanglements continued, and 2016 was a devastating year for whales off the West Coast, with 71 incidents reported — the highest number ever. So in 2017 we left the working group, suing the department for failing to minimize the fishery's harms to whales and sea turtles protected by the Endangered Species Act.

As we awaited our day in court, we publicized each new entanglement, wrote newspaper op-eds, and gathered petition signatures to give to the department. We refused to settle for anything less than real change — and in the end, we got it. And that meant victory for the whales.

Right now, along California's beautiful coastline, these great creatures are migrating north — and no longer have to navigate a vertical minefield of heavy, lethal ropes.



Kristen Monsell • Senior Attorney
Oceans Program

Left page: Gulf coast solitary bee by Center for Biological Diversity
This page: Blue whales swims in Monterey Bay, California by Chase Dekker

HOW WE'RE WINNING

January – May 2019

RARE SUNFISH

The Center and Tennessee Riverkeeper reached an agreement with Mazda Toyota Manufacturing, U.S.A., to protect critically endangered spring pygmy sunfish and minimize impacts from a planned automobile-manufacturing plant in Huntsville, Ala. The agreement will protect at least 1,100 acres of the Beaverdam Spring and Creek Complex, where the sunfish lives, and provide \$6 million to conserve the species and its habitat.



HUMPBACK WHALES

We signed a landmark agreement in March with California and the fishing industry requiring crabbing gear to be removed from the water while whales are most likely to be swimming there. It will also lead to new conservation rules; promotion of safer, ropeless fishing; and a requirement that California seek an Endangered Species Act permit for its crab fishery. Ropes connected to heavy crab traps wrap around whales and sea turtles — cutting them, weakening them and sometimes drowning them.



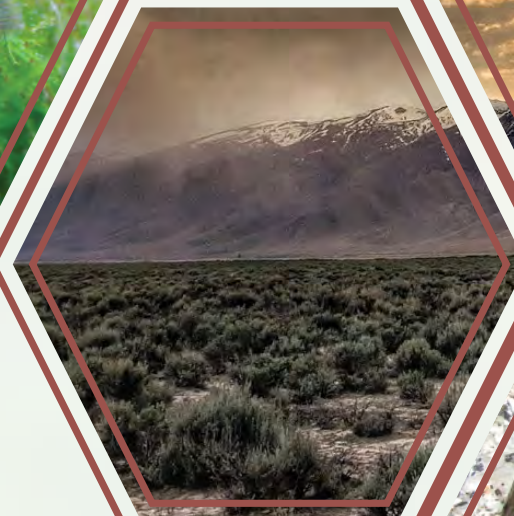
CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY

A California appeals court dismissed an oil-industry lawsuit against youth groups from South Los Angeles and Wilmington, as well as the Center and the city of Los Angeles. A group representing Exxon, Chevron and hundreds of crude-oil and natural-gas producers filed the suit after we won protections against neighborhood oil drilling in Los Angeles.



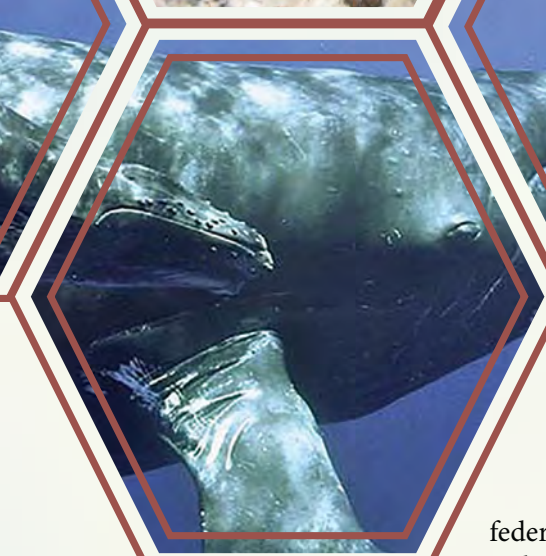
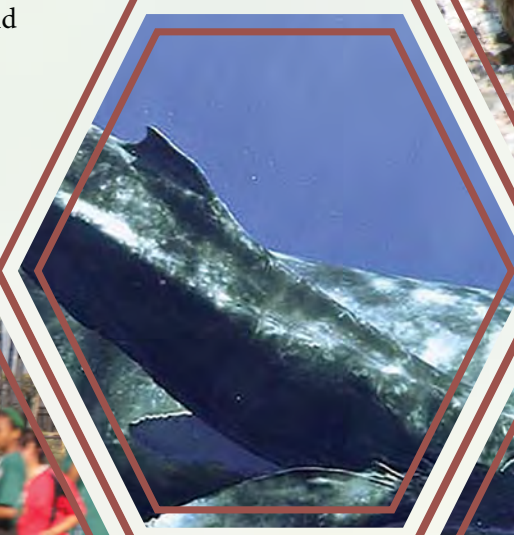
RUBY MOUNTAINS

Following a massive public opposition campaign by the Center and allies, much of Nevada's iconic Ruby Mountains have been saved from oil drilling and fracking: The U.S. Forest Service has rejected a proposal to auction off 54,000 pristine public acres for dirty oil extraction.



CALIFORNIA FROGS AND TOADS

After three of California's rarest amphibians won 1.8 million acres of federally protected critical habitat, an extreme property-rights group sued to overturn the safeguards. The Center and allies intervened, and a federal court upheld the protection. Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs, Yosemite toads and the northern population of mountain yellow-legged frogs can rest a little easier.



GRIZZLIES

After our landmark victory stopping the Trump administration from stripping federal protections from Yellowstone grizzlies, we took legal action to secure a national recovery plan for the bears.





WOLVES

Growing up in Iowa, I never saw a wolf. As a child I learned my home state had once been covered by vast prairies, teeming with magnificent wildlife. But long before my time, those prairies were plowed under. Their bison, grizzlies and wolves were killed off on behalf of the livestock industry.

By 1974, when wolves were given protection under the federal Endangered Species Act, just a handful remained in the lower 48 states. A species that had once roamed far and wide was now confined to far northeastern Minnesota.

Federal protection was crucial. Tragically, though, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service never developed a national recovery plan for wolves. Instead recovery efforts focused on just three areas: the Western Great Lakes states, northern Rockies and Southwest.

Today, even with wolves beginning to establish themselves in Washington, Oregon and California, there are only some 6,000 of them in the lower 48. That's 1 percent of their former numbers. They live in less than 10 percent of their historic range. No scientist would judge such a small population, confined to such limited areas, to be a securely recovered species.

Yet even this modest progress is now at risk.

IN CRISIS

A National Campaign to Save Our Wolves From Trump

The Trump administration is moving quickly to strip wolves of federal protection throughout almost all of the lower 48. Trump officials want to turn recovery efforts over to state governments, which often devalue or even despise these magnificent animals.

We already know what state management of wolves looks like, and it's ugly. The Fish and Wildlife Service has previously removed protection from wolves in various places, before that protection was restored through legal action by the Center and our allies. During the periods when wolves lacked protection, states immediately instituted aggressive hunting and trapping seasons. From the Western Great Lakes to the northern Rockies, more than 5,000 wolves were killed.

That threat is back — and more serious than ever. Last summer we learned that the Trump administration planned to issue a devastating new proposal to strip protection from wolves. We mounted a series of legal actions to block that attack. And in January we launched Call of the Wild, a massive new grassroots campaign to galvanize supporters in the animals' defense.

Through our campaign we've trained more than 1,200 wolf supporters, representing all 50 states. They've held more than 120 outreach events across the nation, met with congressional representatives and governors, and helped collect public comments.

The Center collaborated with other organizations to gather more than 1 million comments opposing the delisting. And since the Trump administration largely refused to hold public hearings, we did so ourselves.

With other groups, we held community-led hearings in Sacramento, Portland and Denver, where the public gave verbal comments that we transcribed. In April we teamed up with Grammy-winning bassist and singer Esperanza Spalding to hold a livestreamed performance to reach even more people.

We delivered nearly a million comments to the Trump administration on May 14. And we're not done yet. At the last minute, due in part to pressure by the Center, the Trump administration extended the comment period to July 15 and agreed to hold at least one public hearing. So we and our allies have a new goal: 1.5 million voices raised for wolves.

Trump officials want to deal a death blow to wolf recovery. But the public overwhelmingly supports keeping wolves protected until they're truly recovered. And the courts have repeatedly found delisting attempts to be premature and unscientific. Judges have restored protection to wolves whenever we've challenged those delisting moves in court.

With public opinion and the law on our side, we'll halt Trump's assault on wolves. And then we'll push for a comprehensive national plan to bring these animals back to the wild places they belong.

If a national wolf recovery plan were developed with requirements for states to recover wolves, they could safely return to my home state of Iowa — and to many other parts of their ancient homeland.

Amaroq Weiss • West Coast Wolf Advocate
Endangered Species Program





THE WILD AND THE WALL

Deep in the southern New Mexico wilderness of mesquite, wildflowers and soaptree yucca, President Trump’s new border wall towers over the landscape. Here in the remote Chihuahuan desert, it’s the only human structure.

This is a serene, silent place. There’s no Border Patrol. No sign of activity. Out here the 20 miles of metal look more like an abstract-art installation than a border-security tactic.

I first visited the place in early 2018, soon after the Department of Homeland Security waived dozens of laws and signaled its intent to start wall construction. I came back last summer to join more than 400 community members, scientists and activists in protesting this senseless, destructive project. I returned recently, after it was finished.

I knew what to expect, but it was still a heartbreaking sight. This wall in the wild is a \$73 million eyesore, a waste of taxpayer funds and an affront to immigrant and border communities.

And it’s already doing real, permanent damage. It prevents migrations that are essential to the survival of many wildlife species.

Radio-collar data show an endangered Mexican wolf migrating across the border through this very stretch of desert in 2017. Had he found a hulking steel barrier in his path, he’d have had to turn back, axing his chances of finding a mate and undercutting the odds of his species’ recovery. The wall also obstructs the natural migration of kit foxes, bighorn sheep and ringtails.

To make matters worse, Trump’s now rushing to extend this deadly barrier 50 miles farther into the wilderness. The new wall section would create a solid, 80-mile blockade for wandering wolves, mountain lions and every other species without wings.

We’re suing the administration to challenge border-wall construction here. In December we argued our case before a federal judge in Washington, D.C. Her decision could come down any day.

The Center has lawsuits pending to stop border walls in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and challenge Trump’s absurd emergency declaration to fund more wall-building. We’re also fighting his wall with groups across the borderlands, helping to organize resistance with people on the front lines in every border state.

Our sprawling borderlands are among the most biodiverse regions in the country, home to endangered species and protected wilderness areas, national parks and wildlife refuges.

We can’t afford to lose another inch of this spectacular landscape to Trump’s border wall.

Laiken Jordahl • Borderlands Campaigner
Public Lands Program



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The Year of the Wolf

From the Director
Kierán Suckling



Wolf by Per Harald Olsen/NTNU

Almost half a century ago, recognizing that our country’s history of exterminating gray wolves had left our wild places and our culture impoverished, the United States launched an ambitious program to save our native wolves from extinction and bring them back to the wild in the lower 48 states.

Over the past four decades, we’ve had joyful moments like the reintroduction of Mexican wolves to the Southwest, brought about by a Center lawsuit. We’ve seen heartrending setbacks, like the beating death of a trapped wolf in New Mexico. Our progress has been fitful but real, painstaking and complex.

Now, in 2019, we’re at a crossroads for these animals, beloved by so many but hated and feared by a powerful few. With Trump at the helm — flanked by men who value profit more than wildlife and men who don’t value wildlife at all — wolves’ future is truly on the line. This is a pivotal year.

Trump’s Fish and Wildlife Service intends to strip wolves of their federal protection and toss their “management”

to the states, many of which will let them be hunted and trapped in overwhelming numbers. If that happens, wolves could be driven back to the brink.

The Center is mounting a far-reaching resistance. Our Call of the Wild campaign is bringing out thousands of passionate grassroots activists to fight for wolves, gathering public comments at farmers’ markets, meeting with their representatives in Congress and rallying at community centers, cafés and marches in support of wolves. This is our largest-ever grassroots organizing push, and if you haven’t already joined it, I hope you soon will.

Trump’s plan has nothing to do with science and everything to do with base political expediency. With your help and hearts in this fight we’ll see it through — on the streets and in the courts. We won’t rest until America’s wolves have a future again.

For the wild,



ENDANGERED EARTH

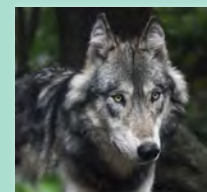
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WOLF ON THE COVER
via Pixabay

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