

# The Rewilding Institute

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**ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY  
PRESS CONFERENCE  
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Albuquerque, New Mexico**

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IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, SCIENTISTS DISCOVERED THAT WE HAD ENTERED THE 6<sup>TH</sup> GREAT EXTINCTION EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF HIGHER FORMS OF LIFE ON EARTH.

TODAY, SPECIES ARE DISAPPEARING AT A RATE ESTIMATED TO BE 1-10 THOUSAND TIMES HIGHER THAN THE EXPECTED BACKGROUND RATE OF EXTINCTION. LEFT UNCHECKED, AT THIS RATE WE COULD LOOSE ABOUT 20% OF THE EARTH'S LIFE FORMS IN MY LIFETIME.

THE LAST GREAT EXTINCTION EVENT OCCURRED 65 MILLION YEARS AGO DURING THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD WHEN THE DINOSAURS BECAME EXTINCT. THAT MASS EXTINCTION IS WIDELY BELIEVED BY SCIENTISTS TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY THE EFFECTS OF A LARGE ASTEROID STRIKING THE EARTH NEAR THE YUCATAN PENINSULA.

THIS TIME THERE HAS BEEN NO ASTEROID STRIKE, THIS TIME THE EXTINCTIONS ARE BEING CAUSED BY US—HUMAN BEINGS AND THE EFFECTS OF OUR ACTIVITIES ON NATURE.

THE POSITIVE SIDE TO THIS DOOM AND GLOOM STORY IS THAT HUMANS ARE AS CAPABLE OF CONSERVING NATURE AND PREVENTING THE LOSS OF SPECIES AS WE ARE OF DESTROYING IT.

IN 1973, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, ACTING THROUGH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS, DEMONSTRATED THEIR COMPASSION FOR NATURE AND IMPERILED SPECIES BY SUPPORTING THE PASSAGE OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT.

TODAY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE UNITED STATES SENATE AS A NATIONAL DAY OF RECOGNITION OF THE PLIGHT AND CONSERVATION NEEDS OF ENDANGERED SPECIES...

AND A CELEBRATION OF THE WISDOM, COMPASSION, AND GENEROSITY OF HUMAN SPIRIT THAT HAS SAVED HUNDREDS, PERHAPS THOUSANDS, OF OUR FELLOW SPECIES FROM GOING EXTINCT.

CONGRESS'S EXPRESS PURPOSE IN PASSING THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT IS TO: TO PROVIDE A MEANS WHEREBY THE ECOSYSTEMS UPON WHICH ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES DEPEND MAY BE CONSERVED AND TO PROVIDE A PROGRAM FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES.

BY THE MOST PRACTICAL MEASURE, THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT HAS BEEN A SUCCESS—LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE IMPERILED SPECIES LISTED FOR PROTECTION UNDER THE ACT HAVE GONE EXTINCT.

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO CELEBRATE SOME NOTABLE ENDANGERED SPECIES SUCCESS STORIES BY FOCUSING ON THE **PEREGRINE FALCON** AND THE **GRAY WOLF**.

**PEREGRINE FALCONS**, ONCE COMMON THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA WERE BROUGHT TO NEAR EXTINCTION IN THE MID 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BY THE WIDESPREAD USE OF PESTICIDES, ESPECIALLY DDT. PESTICIDE RESIDUES CAUSED THE FALCON'S EGG SHELLS TO BECOME THIN AND BREAK BEFORE HATCHING.

THROUGH PROTECTIONS OFFERED BY THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT AND A REQUIRED PLAN OF ACTION TO RECOVER THE SPECIES, PEREGRINE FALCONS HAVE MADE A REMARKABLE COMEBACK THROUGHOUT THE NATION AND RIGHT HERE IN NEW MEXICO. FOLLOWING THEIR RANGE-WIDE RECOVERY, PEREGRINE FALCONS WERE REMOVED FROM THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST IN 1999.

TODAY, WE HAVE AT LEAST TWO PAIRS OF THESE MAGNIFICENT BIRDS BREEDING IN THE SANDIA MOUNTAINS AND A PAIR BREEDING AND EATING PIGEONS IN DOWNTOWN ALBUQUERQUE. IMAGING THE THRILL OF LOOKING OUT YOUR OFFICE WINDOW AND SEEING A PERIGRINE FALCON DIVING AT 200 MPH IN PURSUIT OF A PIGEON.

AND SPEAKING OF FALCON THRILLS IN NEW MEXICO, THE EXTREMELY RARE AND ENDANGERED APLOMADO FALCON IS GRADUALLY RETURNING TO, AND GRACING THE SKIES OF, OUR EQUALLY IMPERILED CHIHUAHUAN DESERT GRASSLANDS. ONE WAS RECENTLY PHOTOGRAPHED ON OTERO MESA NEAR WHERE A PAIR WAS OBSERVED LAST YEAR. THIS FURTHER

UNDERScores THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS AND HABITATS REQUIRED BY ENDANGERED SPECIES, WHICH, AS MENTIONED EARLIER IS A PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT.

**GRAY WOLVES** WERE TRAPPED AND POISONED TO COMPLETE EXTINCTION IN THE WESTERN AND SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FOR THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF PROTECTING DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK. THEY WERE LISTED AS ENDANGERED 30 YEARS AGO.

NORTHERN GRAY WOLVES HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO PORTIONS OF THEIR HISTORIC RANGE IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK AND NEIGHBORING AREAS IN THE NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN ECOSYSTEM AND IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN THE MIDWEST. SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ARE INCREASINGLY DEMONSTRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF WOLVES AND OTHER LARGE PREDATORS IN MAINTAINING THE HEALTH AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF ECOSYSTEMS. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT THE PRESENCE OF WOLVES INCREASES THE NUMBER AND KINDS OF SONGBIRDS IN THE ECOSYSTEM.

THE UNIQUE **MEXICAN GRAY WOLF** THAT INHABITED SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA WAS REDUCED TO JUST 7 ANIMALS—ALL CAPTURED AND PLACED IN CAPTIVITY. LIKE THE PEREGRINE FALCON, AND UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, MEXICAN GRAY WOLVES WERE BRED IN CAPTIVITY AND RETURNED TO THEIR WILD SOUTHWESTERN HAUNTS BEGINNING IN 1998. THEIR HOWLS ARE ECHOING AGAIN THROUGH THE CANYONS OF THE GILA COUNTRY. WE'LL NEED TO WAIT A WHILE LONGER TO SEE HOW THE ECOSYSTEM RESPONDS TO THEIR RETURN.

UNLIKE THE FALCON, THE GRAY WOLF REMAINS LISTED AS ENDANGERED BECAUSE IT REMAINS EXTINCT THROUGHOUT LARGE PORTIONS OF ITS HISTORIC RANGE.

MANY CONSERVATION GROUPS LIKE THOSE REPRESENTED HERE TODAY ACTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR THE CONTINUED RECOVERY OF GRAY WOLVES, APLOMADO FALCONS, AND OTHER ENDANGERED SPECIES.

I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE CONCERNED CITIZENS, WHO ARE WONDERING WHAT THEY CAN DO TO HELP THEIR FELLOW SPECIES, TO SUPPORT AND JOIN THESE GROUPS AND JOIN OTHERS IN VOLUNTEER EFFORTS TO PROTECT NATURE AND SAVE SPECIES. I GUARANTEE IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER!