



OPPOSE THE EXTINCTION RIDER

Interior Bill Blocks Endangered Species Protections

The House Interior Appropriations Bill contains the most sweeping attempt in recent history to gut the Endangered Species Act, increasing the risk of extinction for hundreds of plants and animals. It freezes crucial ESA protections for hundreds of imperiled species. Title I prevents the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service from spending any money to implement some of the most crucial sections of the Act including:

- ✓ Section 4(a) to list new species
- ✓ Section 4(b) to designate habitat critical for species survival
- ✓ Section 4(c) to upgrade the status of any species from threatened to endangered
- ✓ Section 4(e) to assist law enforcement by protecting species that resemble listed species

By no accident, the Extinction Rider *does* allow the Service to spend money on *weakening* protections for wildlife by removing them from the ESAⁱ and by down-listing them from endangered to threatened.ⁱⁱ Put simply, the rider creates a one-way ratchet that allows wildlife protections to be weakened, but never strengthened.

Extinction is so tragic because it is a completely irreversible environmental calamity. With each plant and animal species that disappears, a part of creation is erased forever, and with it a part of our natural system that may have unknown repercussions. Congress must vigorously oppose the Extinction Rider and restore funding for the Endangered Species Act to uphold America's commitment to good stewardship and to preserving all native wildlife.

A Vehicle for Extinction

The Extinction Rider will paralyze our nation's ability to protect hundreds of imperiled wildlife species under the Endangered Species Act. By preventing listings, no additional species can receive protection under the Act. Without this protection, hundreds of species will continue spiraling towards extinction.

For example, the rider would immediately prevent the Service from protecting any of the more than 260 "candidate species" awaiting listing. Candidate species are those that the Service has *already* determined warrant protection under the Act, but can't list because of resources constraints. Many of these species have been waiting over a decade for protection.

Although the Service is negotiating a plan to fix this backlog, the Extinction Rider would callously wipe out this progress by placing a moratorium on listings. And when this moratorium is someday lifted, any species that we haven't already lost will take longer to do so and may need even more restrictive requirements to recover.



Overwhelming Public Support for the ESA

The Extinction Rider is a giveaway to oil companies, big developers, and corporate polluters, and is not supported by the American public. A Harris Interactive poll conducted earlier this year found very strong support for the Act and for making wildlife decisions based on science, not politics, with 92% of respondents agreeing that wildlife management and protection decisions should be made by scientists, not politicians.

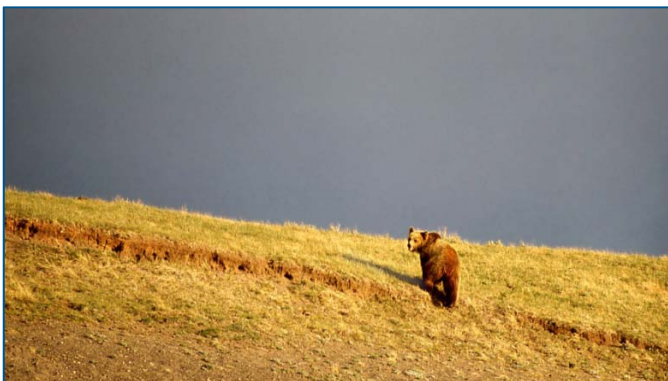
The public clearly overwhelmingly agrees on the importance of saving the unique array of plants and animals that America is blessed with. The rider, on the other hand, would banish some of those species to extinction or a prolonged recovery that will cost taxpayers far more money in the long run.

Alternatives to the Extinction Rider

The rider is a shortsighted attempt at solving a problem that doesn't exist. Supporters of the rider claim that the Endangered Species Act is broken and needs to be fixed. In fact, the ESA has prevented the extinction of hundreds of species. Since 1973, it has saved hundreds of species from extinction, including such iconic American species as the bald eagle, American alligator, grizzly bear and gray wolf. Indeed, less than two dozen species have gone extinct under the Act, and most of these were already doomed to extinction by the time they were listed.

Additionally, the Department of the Interior is working to make the Act even more effective and efficient. It recently began a comprehensive effort to streamline and improve the regulations and policies that implement the Act. For example, the agency is evaluating how Habitat Conservation Plans – one approach to balancing wildlife protection and real estate development – can be made more effective and efficient. The agency is also determining how to improve its private landowner conservation tools, such as Safe Harbor Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements.

The Extinction Rider would only derail these efforts and jeopardize America's natural heritage for all future generations.



Benefits to Humans

Protecting endangered species is not just about saving individual plants and animals from extinction. Protecting imperiled wildlife also means preserving the habitat they depend on, which in turn provides us all with clean air, clean water, and abundant natural resources. All living things are part of the web of life, so protecting endangered species and their habitat protects all of us in the long run as well. We never know what species of plants and animals may be important in developing life-saving medicines in the future, so we should be sure not to let any go extinct.

Likewise, endangered species provide strong economic benefits. For example, red wolves have the potential to provide \$1 million per season in benefits to surrounding communities that serve as habitat for the species' recovery. Private landowners say red wolves help control nutria (a rat-like, nonnative animal) and the damage they cause to irrigation canals, while also having a positive impact on hunting and fishing conditions.



Another example is bats, which provide critical ecosystem services in pollination, seed dispersal and pest control. Mexican free-tailed bats prey on corn earworm moths to save farmers in south-central Texas up to \$1.7 million a year in pesticide costs. Beyond their vital importance to agriculture, bats have provided inspiration to scientific researchers – the study of bat echolocation and locomotion has provided inspiration for novel technological advances in such fields as sonar systems, biomedical ultrasound, sensors for autonomous systems, and wireless communication.

The Interior Appropriations bill before the House of Representatives includes devastating funding cuts and anti-environmental laws that will wreak havoc on our land, water, air, and wildlife. Virtually dismantling the Endangered Species Act is unacceptable. By stripping the Extinction Rider and restoring funding for the Endangered Species Act, Congress can begin to embrace sound science and ensure agencies have the resources they need to effectively protect and preserve the irreplaceable natural resources on which we all rely.

“From the most narrow possible point of view, it is in the best interests of mankind to minimize the loss of genetic variations. The reason is simple: they are potential resources. They are keys to puzzles which we cannot solve, and may provide answers to questions which we have not yet learned to ask.

Who knows, or can say, what potential cures for cancer or other scourges, present or future, may lie locked up in the structure of plants which may yet be undiscovered, much less analyzed? More to the point, who is prepared to risk those potential cures by eliminating those plants for all time? Sheer self-interest impels us to be cautious.”

House Report No. 93-412, 93rd Congress, July 27, 1973

The Faces of Extinction

Following are just a few of the more than 260 plants and animals the Fish and Wildlife Service has *already* determined warrant protection under the Act. Under this bill not one of these will receive the protection they need.



Wolverine. For years wolverines roamed the west down to the Sierra Nevada’s and the Southern Rocky Mountains. Now scientists estimate there are fewer than 300 wolverines left in the lower 48 states across the Cascades and Northern Rockiesⁱⁱⁱ. After being nearly wiped out by fur trappers, this solitary creature’s habitat is likely to decrease by 23% by 2045 and 63% by 2099. This agile animal has an incredibly wide range which was demonstrated when a tagged wolverine traveled more than 500 miles during a two-month period from Grand Teton National Park down to Colorado.^{iv} For this animal, the tools that the Endangered Species Act provides will be crucial to its survival, tools that will disappear if this Extinction Rider is passed.

Pacific Walrus. In the natural world the pacific walrus has only two predators, the orca, or killer whale, and the polar bear. However it is now fighting for its survival from the most devastating threat yet- loss of habitat. An estimated 55,000 to 129,000 Pacific walrus live off Alaska’s western coast in the Chukchi, Bering and Pacific seas, finding shelter and food on the ice. But warming temperatures in the arctic are melting ice and threatening to destroy this habitat altogether. With annual winter ice in the Bering Sea predicted to decrease by 40% by 2050,^v combined with further habitat disturbance from proposed oil and gas development in the Chukchi and Bering seas, the future of the Pacific walrus is already at risk. But if the Extinction Rider is passed its future may be sealed.



Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. Nationwide, anglers spend more than \$30 billion a year to enjoy their sport.^{vi} Unfortunately, the habitat needed to support this activity, not to mention the fish and wildlife that make rivers their home, are in trouble. The Rio Grande cutthroat trout is a perfect example. Currently the trout occupies only about 10% of its historical range.^{vii} Low stream flow, habitat fragmentation, and higher stream temperatures are having devastating impacts. In fact, 8 out of the 14 streams where Rio Grande cutthroat trout still exist are either at risk of or already have unsuitably high temperatures.^{viii} Without ESA protections, this fish and the habitat it needs to survive may be lost forever.

Canada Lynx. With a range from the Northern Rockies to northern New Mexico, the Canada Lynx is a wild cat so rare that no accurate population estimates have ever been made.^{ix} Sadly, habitat disturbances such as logging and snowmobiling have thinned the forest that the lynx relies on for food and shelter.^x This cat, which hunts best on deep soft snow where it can outrun other predators and its prey, the snowshoe hare, is at risk from warmer winters and less snow. This has allowed coyotes to outcompete for the lynx’s food source – resulting in a coyote population boom. While the Canada Lynx is already listed across the northern U.S., its New Mexico populations are on the candidate list, the passage of the Extinction Rider could spell doom for the entire Southern Rockies population of this majestic cat.



Red Knot. Delaware Bay is the second largest migratory shorebird stopover in the U.S. and the largest spawning ground of horseshoe crabs in the world. Once, more than a million shorebirds graced the Bay’s shores to feed on fat-rich horseshoe crab eggs. Each spring this spectacle lured thousands of birdwatchers who spent millions of dollars in small coastal communities. Beginning in the 1990s, overharvesting of horseshoe crabs for bait and the biomedical industry resulted in a dramatic decline in shorebirds. For example, today fewer than 25,000 red knots^{xi} are believed to exist, a fraction of the 150,000 historic levels^{xii}. Listing the red knot under the ESA would initiate the development of a much needed recovery plan. If the Extinction Rider passes, the red knot and the entire Delaware Bay ecosystem of horseshoe crabs, shorebirds and other coastal and marine species – and the coastal economies that rely on them – could pay the price.

Fisher. Found only in North America, the fisher historically ranged from the northern forests of Canada and the U.S. to the Rocky and Pacific Coast Mountains and into the forests of Appalachia. Today, they're found only in small parts of their historic range, and in the Northern Rockies and Northwest they are one of the rarest carnivores. While the fisher is the only predator with the ability to make the porcupine a regular part of their diet^{xiii}, they themselves have few predators aside from man. In the early part of the 20th century they were nearly driven to extinction for their pelts; fortunately, conservation efforts allowed the species to begin to recover. Now, loss of their forest habitat is jeopardizing this recovery and if the Extinction Rider passes a vital tool in their recovery will be lost.



New England Cottontail Rabbit. Once found throughout New England and eastern New York, the New England cottontail's range has shrunk by 75 percent in only the last 50 years.^{xiv} The only cottontail rabbit native to New England, its greatest competitor is the common Eastern cottontail, brought to New England to be hunted, which is able to thrive in a greater variety of habitats than New England cottontails. The proliferation of invasive plant species throughout the region has also greatly contributed to the New England cottontail's decline. We know that planting native shrubs like gray birch, chokeberry, and common juniper will enhance cottontail habitat, but the Extinction Rider could throw a wrench in the creation and implementation of concrete plans to save this critter.

Sonoran Desert Tortoise. For millions of years the desert tortoise has roamed North America. A large herbivore, and official state reptile of both California and Nevada, this tortoise is able to live where temperatures may exceed 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Unfortunately, poaching, habitat loss, upper respiratory tract disease and invasive species all threaten the tortoise whose population has decreased by 90% since the 1950's.^{xv} Protections under the ESA could create plans to help address these threats, as well as minimize or avoid altogether the impacts that solar energy will have on the Sonoran desert tortoise's habitat, plans that will not happen if the Extinction Rider is passed.



Streaked Horned Lark. Once found from British Columbia down to Northern California, the Streaked Horned Lark's habitat is now reduced to Oregon and Washington within the US.^{xvi} Unfettered development means that less than 1% of the native savanna and grassland habitat of the streaked horned lark remains.^{xvii} With less than 800 birds remaining,^{xviii} birders flock to the Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge to catch a glimpse of one of the last stable populations of this beautiful lark. And in Washington state, wildlife watching brings \$1.7 billion, creating 21,000 jobs every year.^{xix} The Extinction Rider could clearly spell doom for the Streaked Horned Lark and devastation to birders and the local jobs they support.

ⁱ House 2012 Interior Appropriations bill, subsection 4(c)(2)(B)(i).

ⁱⁱ House 2012 Interior Appropriations bill, subsection 4(c)(2)(B)(ii).

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolverine/wolverine-122010.pdf>

^{iv} http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_12625990

^v http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/stock/final_pacific_walrus_sar.pdf

^{vi} www.fws.gov/fishing

^{vii} http://tucsi.spatialdynamics.com/RioGrandeCutthroat_General.aspx?SpKey=8

^{viii} www.fws.gov/southwest/Climatechange/poster%20pdfs/RioGrandeCutthroatTroutPoster_Myers.pdf

^{ix} http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/lynx_faqs.pdf

^x www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/lynx/canada_lynx.pdf

^{xi} www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/pdf/redknot_update4-10.pdf

^{xii} www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/pdf/redknot_status07_body.pdf

^{xiii} www.wcs.org/saving-wildlife/other-carnivores/fisher.aspx

^{xiv} www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/wildlife_conservation/solutions/species_restoration_projects/restoring_native_shrublands_for_new_england_cottontail.php

^{xv} www.defenders.org/wildlife_and_habitat/wildlife/desert_tortoise.php

^{xvi} www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/Data/StreakedHornedLark

^{xvii} Oregon-Washington Partners in Flight. 2000. 111pp.

^{xviii} www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp/streakedhornedlark.php

^{xix} <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/tourism/>