



The Endangered Species Act is Needed Now More Than Ever



by Sharon Mader

The Endangered Species Act (ESA), signed into law in 1973, directs federal agencies to “provide for the conservation of ecosystems upon which threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants depend.” The law classifies species as either endangered or threatened, and all species of plants and animals—except pest insects—are eligible for listing.

Since the law’s creation, it has saved hundreds of species of plants and animals from extinction and protected millions of acres of critical habitat necessary for their survival. Not only does the ESA help to prevent extinction, it also drives species recovery, as seen with the bald eagle and peregrine falcon.

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In Defense of Bears

by Stephanie Adams

Spotting a grizzly bear in the wild is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that draws Americans from all 50 states to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks every year. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), with Yellowstone at its core, is one of the last remaining habitats large enough to support grizzlies in the lower 48. The ecosystem is currently home to approximately 720 bears, including renowned grizzly “399,” who makes headlines every spring when she emerges at Grand Teton with a handful of cubs. The path that led to millions of visitors traveling to these national parks for the chance to glimpse a grizzly did not occur overnight, and certainly not by accident.

Grizzlies teetered on the brink of extinction in the 1970s until state and federal land and wildlife managers stepped in and began the process of recovering the Yellowstone grizzly under the Endangered Species Act. The protection of the bears—coupled with decades of work by wildlife scientists, public support and millions of tax payer dollars—has led to a slow rebound of this iconic species in the GYE.

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Last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) removed GYE grizzlies from federal protection under what NPCA believes is a flawed plan, turning the management of grizzly bears outside of park boundaries over to state agencies in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Recovery of a species cannot be limited to simply increasing their numbers on the landscape. If we want to sustain bears in Yellowstone and Grand Teton for future generations, we must make sure strong management plans and commitments are in place to ensure their long-term health.

After careful review, NPCA decided the Service failed to ensure these plans provided adequate protection for grizzlies, nor did it fully consider the ecological changes bears are likely to face in the decades to come.

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Top: A grizzly bear wades through the Snake River in Grand Teton National Park ©Tom Mangelson

Left: The peregrine falcon has made a strong recovery because of the Endangered Species Act.

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FIELD REPORT

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Worth More than Gold

by Stephanie Adams

The only gold you should see when visiting Yellowstone are fields of goldenrods indicating the coming of fall or a pair of golden eagles rising on wind currents. Visitors certainly should not see a large-scale gold mine. Yet, that is a possible reality if multinational mining companies have their way. They've proposed two gold mines just north of the world's first national park, one of which would be within view of the Roosevelt Arch, the park's iconic north entrance.

Fortunately, in response to concerns from thousands of national park advocates, the local community, NPCA and our conservation allies, the U.S. Forest Service has proposed

a 20 year mining ban on the 30,370 acres of public lands that are currently threatened by these mines. This ban would prevent the proposed mines and provide more time for us to work with Congress to secure permanent protection. Two members of Montana's congressional delegation, Senator Tester and Congressman Gianforte, have already stood by Yellowstone and introduced legislation to permanently protect these public lands from mining.

The natural landscape of Yellowstone is more valuable than gold.

To learn more and find out how you can help protect Yellowstone from gold mines, visit: www.npca.org/dontmineyellowstone.



Above: The iconic Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone's north entrance ©Devin070205chen | Dreamstime

Our Last Refuge

by Michael Jamison

Three decades can seem an awfully long stretch, especially when measured against a human lifetime. But it's a blink when calculated against a culture's connection to homeland.

The 30-year effort to safeguard Glacier National Park's southern borderlands—wildlands sacred to the Blackfeet Nation—is beautifully told in the documentary film "Our Last Refuge."

The sweeping narrative begins at "the beginning of time," and moves swiftly into the early 1980s. That's when federal land managers sold oil leases, for just \$1 an acre, in the Badger-Two Medicine—a

wilderness named for the mountain streams that flow from its alpine heights.

The film chronicles the leasing, the legal fights, the protests and the partners who, alongside NPCA, ultimately convinced the U.S. government to cancel all leases in the area.



Oilmen continue their court challenges, of course, but we are patient, and we are persistent. NPCA consistently takes the long view, especially when safeguarding Glacier's timeless cultural and natural treasures against the short-term profits of those who would industrialize our shared heritage.

Watch this powerful story unfold at www.ourlastrefuge.org.

Inappropriate Oil and Gas Development Threatens National Parks

by Holly Sandbo

The National Park System faces unprecedented threats from oil and gas development near the borders of some of our greatest national treasures.

Since the start of 2017, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—the entity responsible for permitting oil and gas leasing on the majority of federal lands—has announced lease sales with parcels on or near the borders of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Zion National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, Great Basin National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Hovenweep National Monument, Dinosaur National Monument, Fossil Butte National Monument, Fort Laramie National Historic Site and others. The sheer quantity of sales represents a historic uptick in park-adjacent leasing, and the ensuing development of these parcels potentially threatens the natural and cultural resources that make these sites worthy of Park Service management.

Equally troubling are the changes to the public commenting process. New mandates to conduct lease sales each quarter in every BLM field office have put significant pressure on BLM field staff, resulting in a much-reduced public process and less environmental study before lease sales are conducted. The lack



of opportunities for the public to understand and comment on oil and gas leases is a great concern, as park-adjacent oil and gas development has negative impacts to visitor experience, night skies, viewsheds, air quality and noise levels in the parks.

In March, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke temporarily deferred sales near Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico citing adverse impacts to cultural resources and the economic value of protecting lands near our national parks and treasured landscapes. The leases appear to be back on the auction block for December 2018. In Utah, parcels near Zion National Park and Dinosaur National Monument were partially deferred only after intervention by the state's governor. The disorganized approach to 'saving' some lands while endangering others with equal cultural,

recreational and historical values is not a sustainable way to manage energy development on our public lands.

Here in the Northern Rockies region, the BLM deferred a single lease near Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota, but auctioned off six leases near Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming to the highest bidder. Ironically, of the six leases at Fort Laramie that were offered, only one sold. How much did our nation's cultural heritage go for at auction? Just two dollars an acre. NPCA believes the value of America's cultural and historic heritage far outweighs any amount of oil or gas that could be extracted at their doorsteps.

The Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management must commit to a more consistent, inclusive process that ensures new energy development on federal lands prioritizes protecting national parks.

Interior Secretary Zinke grew up on the doorstep of Glacier National Park, so we know he understands how special America's national parks are to all Americans. NPCA calls on Secretary Zinke to step up and ensure no NPS-managed land is negatively impacted by oil and gas development and that he meaningfully engages the public in the permitting process.

Above: A pump jack near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. ©NPCA.

Bottom: Well pads along the Little Missouri River in the North Dakota Badlands. ©Chris Boyer | Kestrel Aerial Services



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The ESA, originally signed by President Nixon with bipartisan congressional support, has also enjoyed broad public support and remarkable success since its inception. This success is rooted in the tools it provides land and wildlife managers, like the National Park Service, to identify threats to a species' survival and act upon them. The act empowers managers to implement policies, request scientific studies and execute management strategies that help bring species back from the brink.

Though national parks have always provided sanctuary for threatened and endangered species, these protected public lands cannot serve as islands unto themselves. Many species are wide-ranging and rely on habitat beyond the park's protected boundaries. The ESA provides federal land managers the leeway to work collaboratively with other federal lands managers, state agencies and the public to ensure we conserve America's natural heritage.

This law is one of the most important national safeguards for protecting plants and wildlife. Despite the inevitable controversy and conflict that can arise around species preservation, it is imperative to uphold the Endangered Species Act to ensure our children will find the same plants and wildlife we see in national parks today, like grizzlies in Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier.

Unfortunately, there are significant efforts occurring in Congress to weaken and alter the act. If members of Congress move to change the ESA, we will need your help!

We'll alert you if any bills to dismantle the ESA come to a vote.

Above: Grizzly bears can be found in and around Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier.
©Tom Mangelson

In Defense of Bears

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NPCA and our tribal and conservation allies are therefore fighting this decision in court. We believe the delisting plan:

- Fails to include firm commitments from the states to maintain the existing number of bears or prevent long-term decline;
- Could open the way to hunting grizzlies on private and state land inside Grand Teton, within the John D. Rockefeller Parkway, and adjacent to Yellowstone and Grand Teton;
- Fails to include measures that would encourage genetic connectivity with other grizzly populations, leaving Yellowstone and Grand Teton grizzlies as an isolated population;
- Fails to provide the National Park Service with a formal seat at the table with Montana, Wyoming and Idaho to determine how best to manage bears that move between the parks and adjacent lands; and
- Fails to adequately consider how climate change could impact grizzly bears.

Simply stated, the Service's final decision fails to assure adequate protections for GYE grizzlies into the future.

The resiliency of this population may be tested as soon as this fall, as the state of Wyoming rushes to open a grizzly bear hunt that could permit the killing of 24 bears just beyond national park boundaries. The hunt even allows some hunters to utilize baiting—a practice that involves enticing bears with human food and waiting for them to approach for easy kills. We can and must do better for grizzly bears.



We need your help.
Join us to speak up for the bears of Yellowstone and Grand Teton by telling Wyoming Governor Mead to halt Wyoming's short-sighted proposal to bait and kill Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bears this fall.

Visit www.npca.org/grizzlies



Whitefish Range Partnership Finds Shared Future Through Forest Planning

by Sarah Lundstrum

About six years ago, folks with very diverse interests in Glacier Country had a wild idea: let's take ownership of our backcountry backyard and build our own future in the North Fork Flathead River Valley. We met consistently for more than a year, ultimately achieving unanimous agreement on how U.S. Forest Service lands adjacent to Glacier National Park's wild western border should be managed. The Flathead National Forest has now adopted all of our key recommendations, proving that local input matters and that people who work together in good faith can have a positive impact.

Our effort, the Whitefish Range Partnership, focused exclusively on forestlands located north of Whitefish and west of the North Fork Flathead River, stretching from Big Mountain to Glacier National Park to the Canadian border—a region known as the Whitefish Range. NPCA organized this diverse group, whose partners included landowners, business owners, wilderness advocates, motorized recreationists, horsemen, hunters, anglers, mountain bikers, timber interests, and wildlife and trails advocates, among many others.

This was the first time that many historically divided interests had sat together in the same room to recognize our shared love of the North Fork and Glacier National Park as a touchstone for a shared future. In the beginning, no one was sure where we were headed, or what would come of it. But after the first few meetings—and ample servings of elk chili and cornbread—we defined our collective vision for the Whitefish Range and began putting our recommendations for the Forest Service on paper.

Partnerships such as these require tremendous time and resources over multiple years, but that's what we do. We understand the heritage we've inherited, and we keep the long vision in focus for the legacy we'd like to leave behind. Our partners make it possible.

In the end, we unanimously submitted recommendations on 10 subjects to the Forest Service for how the area should be managed, all of which improve the integrity of the Greater Glacier Ecosystem—from forest health to clean water to recreation to wildlife connectivity to wilderness solitude. By supporting one another, all of our values

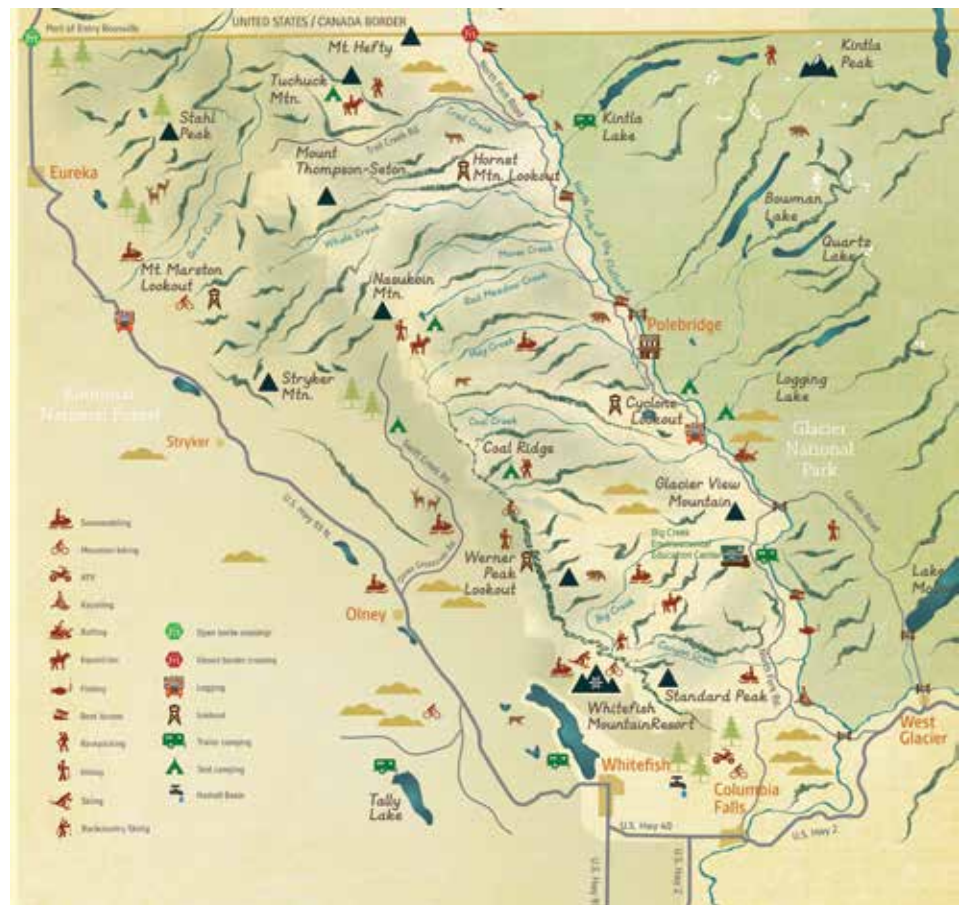


were elevated throughout the park-adjacent Whitefish Range. It is a historic agreement, and a remarkable outcome, and will bring benefits to Glacier National Park for generations to come.

In the grand scheme of conservation work, six years isn't that long—but these past six years will lead to decades of conservation on the ground. The Flathead National Forest plan is scheduled to be signed in Washington, D.C. this summer, and will be the guiding document for management of the Whitefish

Range for at least the next 20 years. More importantly, the relationships we built through the partnership will endure and allow the difficult but necessary conversations around our public lands to happen just a little easier.

Above: The North Fork Flathead River flows past Glacier National Park through the golden larch of fall. ©Trevor Eagleton **Below:** An illustration of the WRP agreement, from recommended wilderness and wildlife habitat near the Canadian border, to timber harvest and multiple-use recreation next to Whitefish.





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INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES

Exploring Yellowstone's Great Animal Migrations



by Sharon Mader

National Geographic photojournalist and filmmaker Joe Riis has devoted years to documenting animal migrations in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. His ground-breaking work follows the extensive journeys of pronghorn, mule deer and elk, bringing national attention to the importance of preserving habitat in key wildlife migration corridors. Riis' work has also illuminated how little we truly know about these historic journeys—some of the longest in the lower 48 states.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) is one of the largest intact temperate-zone

ecosystems on earth, encompassing 18 million acres in northwest Wyoming, southwest Montana and eastern Idaho. Riis's stunning photography and compelling video portrays the vast scale of these historic migrations across the GYE, the perils these animals face during their travels and the need to protect these precious corridors in the face of population increase and industrialization in these rural states.

Riis' most recent book, "Yellowstone Migrations: Preserving Freedom to Roam," follows his photographic journey of the Yellowstone elk migration. The up-close view

of the challenges to elk migration captured in his photos highlights the value of retaining these traditional paths across Wyoming and Montana.

To learn more and see a sample of his wonderful work, join NPCA and the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming, on June 26 for a special presentation by Joe Riis.

Above: Migration photo demonstrates that pronghorn antelope prefer to go under fences verses jumping over them. ©Joe Riis

