

15 Actions to Protect Endangered Species

1) **Learn about endangered species in your area.** It's not just about snow leopards in Russia, it's about the ecosystem in your own backyard. Become aware of wildlife, birds, fish, and plants that live near you, and teach your family and neighbors. From the worms in the garden to the bats that pollinate plants and control mosquitos, there are many creatures affected by our daily habits at home.

2) **Create a backyard wildlife habitat.** Native plants provide food and shelter for native wildlife. Attracting native insects like bees and butterflies can help pollinate your plants and provide food for native birds. Avoid planting non-native plants, which compete with native species for resources and habitat. For more information about native plants, visit www.plantsocieties.org

3) **Minimize use of herbicides and pesticides and reduce use of fertilizer.** These chemicals may keep yards looking nice, but they are also hazardous pollutants that can affect wildlife at many levels. Many herbicides and pesticides take a long time to degrade, thus building up in the soils or spreading through the food chain, poisoning predators such as hawks, owls and coyotes. Excess fertilizer can easily wash into streams and rivers, where amphibians are particularly vulnerable to deformities or deaths. For alternatives, visit www.beyondpesticides.org



monarch butterfly on milkweed

4) **Make your home wildlife friendly.** Secure garbage in shelters or cans with locking lids, feed pets indoors and lock pet doors at night to avoid attracting wild animals into your home. Never dump paint, oil, pharmaceuticals, or other chemicals down toilets, storm drains or into streams or lakes. Keep litter and pet waste out of the street drain, where it can wash into rivers, lakes or the ocean. Disinfect birdbaths often to avoid disease transmission. You can help reduce the number of bird collisions simply by placing decals on the windows in your home and office. For more information on what you can do, visit the US Fish and Wildlife Service



Kemp's ridley sea turtle

5) **Slow down when driving.** Many animals live in developed areas and must navigate a landscape full of human hazards. Roads divide habitat and present a constant threat to any animal attempting to cross from one side to the other. So, when you're out and about, slow down and keep an eye out for wildlife. Don't discard any trash or food waste from your car, as it can attract wildlife to the roadside.

6) **Reduce your use of plastic products.** Take your bags to the store, reuse containers and properly dispose of lightweight plastics. Wild animals get tangled in these products, and they end up in the ocean, being ingested by small fish and killing off beneficial microorganisms.

7) **Recycle and buy sustainable products.** Buy recycled paper, sustainable products like bamboo and Forest Stewardship Council wood products to protect forest species. Never buy wood furniture sourced from rainforests. Recycle your cell phones to prevent habitat destruction in mining new minerals. Minimize your use of palm oil; forests where tigers and other rare animals live are being cut down to plant palm plantations.

8) **Never purchase products made from threatened or endangered species.** Sometimes trip souvenirs are made from species nearing extinction. Avoid supporting the market in illegal wildlife, including tortoiseshell, ivory, and coral. Be careful of products that include crocodile skin, fur from tigers, polar bears, or other endangered wildlife, or medicinal products made from rhinos, tigers or bears. Many other animals and plants are often traded illegally or in ways that harm species survival – monkeys, apes, birds such as parrots and finches, reptiles, orchids, cacti and cycads. Only deal with verified reputable sources.

9) **Do not purchase products from companies that are known polluters.** Many industries pollute natural water resources and lobby hard so that they don't have to clean up their own messes. You can do your part by not giving these companies your business, and cast your vote with your dollar. Spread the word about bad business practices, and when it dings their bottom lines, these companies will take notice.



Peter's Mountain Mallow

10) **Report any harassment of threatened and endangered species.** Harassing wildlife is cruel and illegal. Shooting, trapping, or forcing a threatened or endangered animal into captivity is also illegal and can lead to their extinction. Don't participate in these activities, and report it as soon as you see it to your local state or federal wildlife enforcement office.

11) **Visit or volunteer at a wildlife refuge, park or other open space.** These protected lands provide habitat to many native wildlife, birds, fish, and plants. Go wildlife or bird watching in nearby parks. Volunteer at your local nature center or wildlife refuge. Organize or participate in a "clean up" campaign of an important habitat in your area.



Indiana bat

12) **Protect wildlife habitat.** Perhaps the greatest threat that faces many species is the widespread destruction of habitat. Scientists tell us the best way to protect endangered species is to protect the special places where they live. Wildlife must have places to find food, shelter and raise their young. Logging, oil and gas drilling, over-grazing and development all result in habitat destruction. By protecting habitat, entire communities of animals and plants can be protected together. Support wildlife habitat and open space protection in your community. When you are buying a house, consider your impact on wildlife habitat.

13) **Be vocal and contact your civil servants.** Write a letter to your local newspaper urging support of important species protection measures. E-mail your Congressional representatives asking them to support the Endangered Species Act. It cannot rest on the scientific community alone to defend the natural world; voters and consumers must take a stand. This means signing petitions and writing letters.

14) **Get in touch with your Fish and Game Department.** If you hunt, keep your licenses up to date and stay in touch with your local department so that you know which populations of game need culling and which are under threat. Hunting, instituted properly, is a sustainable way of maintaining wild populations such as deer and turkey.



candy darter fish

15) **Join others in the annual Stop Extinction Challenge** (usually in August). To learn more and get involved, visit the Endangered Species Coalition at www.endangered.org