



# 10 ENDANGERED SPECIES TRUMP IS MOST LIKELY TO DRIVE EXTINCT

*A Listicle by the Center for Biological Diversity*



**T**he U.S. government is in charge of saving and protecting more than 1,622 animals and plants on the endangered species list. Over the past four decades, the Endangered Species Act has saved 99 percent of the species under its care from extinction. The Trump administration, however, threatens to undermine that success through a deadly combination of drastic budget cuts, policy changes, neglect and abandonment of programs that have proven worthwhile. Here are the 10 species mostly likely to be driven extinct by the Trump administration.

## 1. AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Endangered Species Act protected since 1978



African elephant courtesy Pixabay

African elephants are highly intelligent and social animals. They display grief, altruism, compassion and self-awareness. Elephants rely on their long-term memories, coupled with seasonal cues, to travel vast distances in close-knit herds to find water and food throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Tragically, these elephants – Earth's largest land mammals – are being slaughtered for their ivory tusks at rates that are causing severe population declines across the continent. Habitat loss, human-elephant conflict and political instability pose additional and significant long-term challenges to the elephants' survival.



Despite plummeting populations, the Trump administration is slashing \$1 million from the African Elephant Conservation Fund, which provides financial support for essential protection activities, especially anti-poaching efforts. And in December 2017, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke reversed an Obama administration ban on importing elephant trophies from Zimbabwe.



## 2. UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER SPRING-RUN CHINOOK SALMON

Endangered Species Act protected since 1999



Chinook salmon courtesy BLM

In the Pacific Northwest, salmon are cultural icons. They are critical to the region's ecosystem, returning ocean nutrients to rivers that benefit both people and wildlife. Chinook, also called "king" salmon, are the largest salmon species, with adults often exceeding 40 pounds. Once found in abundance, hydropower development and irrigation diversions, along with water storage and commercial salmon harvest, threaten the species' existence. There is now a high risk they will go extinct.



Despite the chinook's critically-imperiled status, the Trump administration is eliminating funding for the Washington Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group, which supports statewide salmon recovery efforts including habitat restoration and hatcheries. The administration's budget also eliminates funding for Long Live the Kings, a nonprofit working to restore wild salmon and support sustainable fishing.



## 3. FLORIDA GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

Endangered Species Act protected since 1986

Florida grasshopper sparrow courtesy USFWS

The Florida grasshopper sparrow is generally recognized as North America's most endangered bird. Only a few inches long and weighing barely 1 ounce, these non-migratory ground-dwellers are found only in Florida's dry prairie. Today, more than 90 percent of these prairies are gone, lost to pastures, citrus, sod and pine farms. In just two decades, the population declined by nearly 95 percent. Before Hurricane Irma in September 2017, it was projected that there may be as few as 10 females in the wild for the 2018 breeding season. Now that number is likely lower.

A captive breeding program was initiated in 2014 to give the birds a chance at survival. The program has been instrumental in the fight to save the Florida grasshopper sparrow from extinction.



The Trump administration has eliminated critical federal funding for this program. It's unclear where or how the program will raise enough money to continue operating. Without these funds, the Florida grasshopper sparrow will likely go extinct in the near future.



## 4. WHOOPING CRANE

Endangered Species Act protected since 1967



Whooping crane courtesy USDA

The whooping crane is one of the rarest – and tallest – birds in North America. Standing 5 feet tall with a wingspan of 7 feet or more, the crane has become a nationally recognized symbol of endangered species. The population was once widespread, but due to hunting and habitat destruction the last migrating flock plummeted to just 15 birds before it was eventually protected in 1967. Today there are only about 500 whooping cranes left in the wild. Scientists have long recognized the risk that all or most of these birds could be wiped out from a single event such as a hurricane, disease outbreak, toxic spill or prolonged drought.

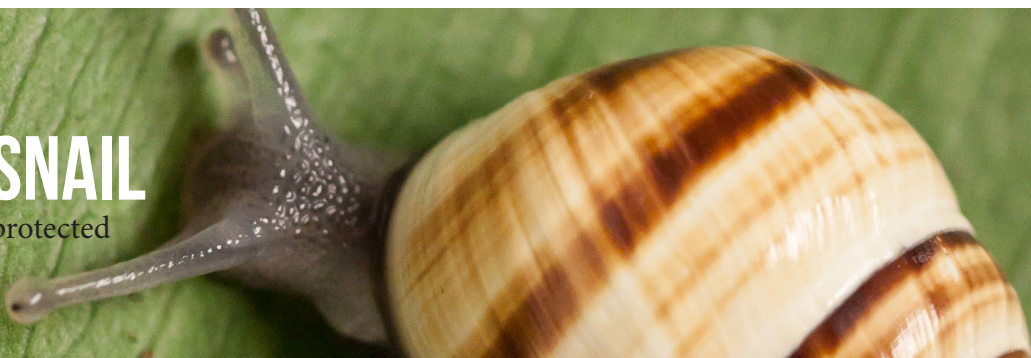
To help save the whooping crane from extinction, a captive breeding program was created at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland in 1966. At that time, just 42 birds remained. Viewed as a model of wildlife conservation, for 51 years the program successfully bred whooping cranes for release into the wild, helping establish additional populations to ensure the bird's survival.



Federal funding for the \$1.5 million breeding program was cut in October 2017 and all full-time employees were assigned new duties. The Patuxent whooping cranes will either join the wild flocks or be shipped to other breeding centers or zoos in the coming year, dealing a death blow to this successful captive breeding program.

## 5. OAHU TREE SNAIL

Endangered Species Act protected since 1981



Oahu tree snail by David Sischo

Oahu tree snails have been described as the “jewels of the forest” because of the colorful patterns of their shells. The snails were once so abundant and popular that their shells were used in Hawaiian folklore and lei and other ornaments. Sadly, up to 90 percent of Hawaii's 750 known terrestrial snails have already been lost to extinction. The entire genus of the Oahu tree snail – which consisted of roughly 41 different species of tree snails found only on the island of Oahu – is highly endangered and at least half of the species are believed to be extinct.

Today, only 11 of the 41 Oahu tree snail species can be found. One is down to only a single individual. The primary threats are habitat loss and predation by introduced animals such as rosy snails, rats and chameleons. The Snail Extinction Prevention Program (SEP) was created to protect Hawaii's most at-risk snail species, including the Oahu tree snail. This program utilizes captive propagation, emergency field actions and reintroductions into the wild.



The Trump administration's proposal to eliminate the federal competitive State Wildlife Grant Program, cut general endangered species recovery funding and prioritize delisting species rather than preventing extinctions will make it even harder to save these snails.



## 6. HAWAIIAN TREE COTTON OR KOKI'O

Endangered Species Act protected since 1984

Hawaiian tree cotton by David Eickhoff

The koki'o, or Hawaiian tree cotton, is one of the rarest, most spectacular trees in the world. Growing to a height of nearly 33 feet with star-shaped leaves and large red flowers, it is extremely endangered in its native habitat on the Big Island of Hawaii. Hawaii's dry forests have decreased by almost 90 percent. Today, only four wild koki'o trees grow in the remaining habitat.

Hawaii's Plant Extinction Prevention Program (PEPP) and the state of Hawaii are working to save the last of the Hawaiian cotton trees and hundreds of other plant species that have fewer than 50 individuals. Before PEPP, Hawaii was losing approximately one plant species every year. Since its creation in 2003, PEPP has not let any of the 238 plant species under its care go extinct, including the koki'o.



The Trump administration has proposed cutting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's budget by 8.6 percent overall, and the agency cut PEPP's budget by 50 percent. Additional cuts are also expected for 2018.



## 7. PUERTO RICAN PARROT

Endangered Species Act protected since 1984

Puerto Rican parrot courtesy USFWS

The bright green Puerto Rican parrot – recognizable for its red forehead and white-ringed eyes – was once widespread and abundant in the island's old-growth forests. By the late 1600s, there were approximately 1 million birds. However, after decades of habitat destruction and poaching, along with recent natural disasters like hurricanes Irma and Maria, the population has plummeted. There are only about 500 left, mostly spread across captive-breeding and release facilities and wild populations in El Yunque and the Rio Abajo state forests. Most of the wild population in El Yunque – about 50 to 55 birds – remains unaccounted for after Hurricane Maria.

As with most of the critically-endangered species on this list, the parrot is being saved by a variety of federal programs aimed at preventing extinction.



Proposed budget cuts to endangered species recovery programs will reduce funding for critical efforts like captive propagation and habitat restoration. In addition, the Trump administration's most recent request for hurricane relief was only \$44 billion – half of what Congress is expected to provide – and delays the full funding request for Puerto Rico aid. The Trump proposal would have provided no funding to restore any wildlife refuges in Puerto Rico and no funds to address impacts from the hurricanes on endangered species like the Puerto Rican parrot.



## 8. RED WOLF

Endangered Species Act protected since 1967



Red wolf courtesy USFWS

Red wolves are some of the most endangered carnivores in the world. The wolves were once widely distributed throughout the southeastern United States. But they were nearly exterminated due to fear they might kill livestock. The population fell so precipitously that in 1975, 17 red wolves were put into a captive breeding program to stop extinction. But in 1980, red wolves were declared extinct in the wild. The captive breeding program eventually got the wild population up to 130 wolves in 2006. Unfortunately, the population began to decline and crashed in 2014. At the beginning of 2016, only 45 red wolves remained in the wild. Mismanagement, illegal killing and hybridization with coyotes are the main threats to red wolves.



Instead of strengthening protections, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdrew its support of red wolf recovery and stopped releasing captive wolves into the wild. The agency has even issued permits to landowners allowing them to shoot and kill red wolves on their property. Under Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke – who voted against protections for endangered species 100 percent of the time during his congressional stint – the future of the red wolf is bleak.



## 9. NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

Endangered Species Act protected since 1970

Right whales courtesy NOAA

The North Atlantic right whale is one of the most endangered of all large whales and can weigh up to 150,000 pounds and grow as long as 48 feet. A long history of human exploitation, coupled with recent threats like entanglement in fishing gear, ship strikes and seismic oil and gas surveys, has made current population trends so dire that experts predict the whale could vanish within 20 years. Only about 450 right whales remain. Seventeen were killed in 2017 after being hit by boats or tangled in fishing gear. Of the remaining population, as few as 100 are breeding females.



Despite the urgent need for increased recovery efforts, the Trump administration is slashing the National Marine Fisheries Service's protected resources budget by \$5 million and completely eliminating funding for the Marine Mammal Commission – an independent, science-based oversight agency that has been instrumental in right whale conservation efforts. On top of that, the Trump administration is pushing for expanded oil and gas drilling in areas that include prime right whale habitat.



# 10. LAUREL DACE

Endangered Species Act protected since 2011



Laurel dace courtesy J.R. Shute, Conservation Fisheries, INC.

The laurel dace is a small red and black fish that is on the brink of extinction. Named after the laurel bushes that grow along streams in Tennessee's Cumberland Mountains, the fish is found in only three creeks and threatened by drought, water pollution and invasive species. It desperately needs recovery money for captive propagation, landowner outreach, land acquisition and conservation easements. Due to the Southeast's ongoing severe drought, by the end of 2016 the species was on the cusp of extinction, so some fish were rescued from drying pools and taken to the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute to prevent the species from being lost forever.

The laurel dace, along with dozens of other Southeast species, could be saved with adequate recovery funding.



The Trump administration is not providing enough resources to fully fund the recovery of the laurel dace and other unique species that are facing imminent extinction due to lack of funding for recovery efforts.