



## Protecting and Restoring Wildlife

The National Wildlife Federation is committed to protecting and restoring habitats vital to sustaining diverse wildlife.

**W**hile we continue to press for wildlife-friendly policies and actions on many fronts, we have much to celebrate this year. Gray wolves, Yellowstone grizzly bears, Pacific salmon—to name a few species—are all better off because NWF and our partners succeeded in rallying citizens, joining with communities and working with lawmakers to protect these iconic creatures and safeguard their habitat.

### Gray Wolves Get Another Chance

The howl of the gray wolf may soon be heard again in the Northern Forest, thanks to a big win in a federal district court in Vermont. The ruling, on a lawsuit filed in 2003 by NWF and our partners, declared that the Bush Administration violated the Endangered Species Act when it reduced protection for gray wolves across the 48 states two years ago. Wolves—once nearly eliminated—are now beginning to thrive in the Northern Rockies and Great Lakes regions. Citing success in these two areas, the federal government tried to end protections for wolves in the Northeast where suitable habitat exists but the animals have not had a chance to repopulate in viable numbers.

Federal law requires recovery of the species across a “significant portion” of its historic range, but the gray wolf occupies only 3% of its original habitat. The federal government thought it could get away with declaring total victory based on a partial win.

NWF continues to team up with our partner organizations to bring wolves back to other regions of the country. With tools such as our acclaimed *Wolf Tracks* curriculum and Wolf Awareness Week, we are building ever-greater support for this predator’s recovery.

### Grizzly Bears Recover in Yellowstone

Once numbering in the thousands, the number of grizzly bears throughout the West dropped to a mere 250 in 1975. Today, after two decades of hard work on the part of NWF and other national and local groups, there are more than 600 bears in the Greater Yellowstone area, greatly exceeding the recovery goals. This recovery effort is nothing short of a stunning success story. So, this year, we celebrate the removal of the bears from the endangered species list.

However, that doesn’t mean Yellowstone grizzlies will have no protection. This past year, NWF worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a package of safeguards that will be implemented once the bears are delisted and will actually expand habitat from 6 million to more than 12 million acres. We also worked with the governors of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho to produce state management plans for grizzly bear populations.

*The grizzly bear population in the Yellowstone National Park region “is now healthy enough to be taken off the list of threatened species under the Endangered Species Act,” says Tom France, director of the NWF Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center.*

Grizzly bears outside the Greater Yellowstone area remain endangered. NWF will continue to collaborate with our partners to save the habitat that supports the bears while building local and national support to strengthen and expand protection for these majestic animals.

## Fighting to Save the Last Frontier . . . and Winning

The Arctic Wildlife Refuge only holds enough oil to fuel the U.S. economy for six months to two years at best. Even the U.S. Department of Energy thinks that Arctic drilling would reduce gas prices by just one cent per gallon—and only in 20 years after drilling begins.

At stake is a 19-million acre sanctuary that provides habitat for 180 species of birds from four continents. It is home to the largest population of land-denning polar bears in America, and its coastal plain—the precise target for drilling—is the primary calving ground for the Porcupine caribou herd, which is central to the survival and cultural identity of the Alaskan Gwich'in Nation.

Yet, Congress continues to make this spectacular, unspoiled sanctuary a political football. The latest episode unfolded in December 2005. A proposal to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was included in the Senate budget bill. When this approach was defeated, the drilling provision was cynically attached to the Defense Appropriations bill. NWF and our allies moved swiftly to speak out against these tactics. Ultimately, we were successful in defeating the measure and protecting this pristine sanctuary. We will continue to work at the grassroots level and with members of Congress to achieve a permanent protected status to keep this extraordinary ecosystem intact for all time.

## Protecting Tribal Lands

The Cocopah Tribe and NWF are collaborating to preserve the cultural and biological resources of riparian habitat along the Lower Colorado River near Yuma, Arizona. The Lower Colorado is a key component of the Pacific Flyway, providing habitat for migrating birds, including endangered and threatened species such as the yellow-billed cuckoo, Southwestern willow flycatcher, and Bell's vireo. It sustains considerable stands of native cottonwood, willow and mesquite along with invasive saltcedar.

The restoration and protection of tribal and adjacent public land will complete a link among national wildlife and wilderness areas along the Lower Colorado, treating the river as a complete ecosystem rather than as fragmented areas. NWF and the Cocopah have engaged representatives from non-profits, local organizations, and government agencies from the U.S. and Mexico to collaborate on river protection. The project unites NWF's strategic drivers by confronting global warming, protecting and restoring wildlife, and connecting people with nature.

The significance of the Lower Colorado is unambiguous for Tribal Elder Colin Soto. "We think of the river as a gift to us. When you take the river, the trees and the woods away, I have no identity. If the river stops flowing, we will no longer exist."

## New Fund Will Protect Wyoming Wildlife

In March 2005, NWF celebrated a long-awaited victory when Wyoming Governor David Freudenthal signed into law a bill that creates a Wildlife Trust Fund. The Fund will conserve Wyoming wildlife habitat through a permanent trust account of up to \$200 million.



Protecting the Arctic for future generations.

Partnering with our state affiliate, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, NWF fought for over a decade to bolster safeguards for the state's Red Desert—a refuge for the golden eagle, sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, pronghorn antelope, and thousands of desert elk. But funding always fell short.

Together with the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, NWF mobilized a diverse coalition of Wyoming citizens who pushed the state legislature to approve the bill that created the Trust Fund—needed now more than ever in the face of proposals to increase oil and gas drilling in this region. A portion of state revenues will be allocated to the Trust Fund to protect critical natural areas and migratory corridors.

## Protecting Mexico's Wilderness

Political boundaries are invisible to wildlife. Case in point: about one third of the bird species that breed in the U.S. and Canada depend on winter habitat in Mexico or farther south.

The health of Mexico's wilderness is critically important to many of the wildlife species of the entire continent. That's why, over the past four years, we have trained over 1,300 teachers across Mexico, to use the Spanish language version of our Schoolyard Habitats Program®. We estimate that over 650 habitats have been created in Mexico since the program began, providing valuable refuge for Mexican wildlife and a powerful tool for educating the next generation of conservationists. We have empowered three groups of Mexican education experts to offer this training in different parts of the country, and requests for them to train others are coming in from as far away as Brazil and Uruguay.

Meanwhile, NWF continues to protect wild places in many developing countries where our migratory birds spend over half their lives. We recently won Congressional passage of legislation that protects freshwater ecosystems, which are essential for migratory birds, by providing water and sanitation services to countries most in need.

## Defending America's Wetlands

There is no more potent example of how important healthy wetlands are to our well-being than in the Gulf Coast states following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They buffer population centers from flood waters, filter pollutants, and protect against storm surges—to name just a few critical natural functions they serve. And of course they provide some of the richest habitat there is for many species of plants and animals.

The US Army Corps of Engineers continues to launch wetland-destructive projects all over the country. We had a busy year as we worked to stop or slow some of these initiatives, particularly in Georgia.

NWF and our affiliate, the Georgia Wildlife Federation, put pressure on the some of the most damaging development projects proposed by the Corps. We filed a lawsuit to

### David Conrad

*NWF Senior Water Resources Specialist*



David Conrad recalls the morning he took his 5-year old daughter to a restoration project near the Anacostia River. She planted a tree to control erosion, and at that young age, this was "one of the most important things she had done," David remembers fondly.

Since joining NWF 16 years ago, David has worked to modernize our nation's approach to managing water resources. He is raising awareness about the importance of flood plains and wetlands—especially in the wake of this year's devastating hurricanes. And he is leading our campaign to reform the wasteful practices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

An avid hiker, backpacker, and traveler, David had a deep appreciation of nature from an early age. "I didn't like waste," he says, and that led him to dedicate his life to conservation. "I can't imagine a more spiritually rewarding activity than to spend my life at this kind of work."

When asked about the one simple thing people can do, David says, "Find the time to get involved in a restoration project near your home." Projects sponsored by local nature centers and NWF affiliates "give us all a chance to make an up front and personal contribution to the health of our waters and our planet."

stop a mine proposed by Martin Marietta, and notified the Corps of our intent to sue over a large residential development to be located in the isolated wetlands of east Georgia. We also threatened litigation against a titanium mining operation near the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia which forced the mining company to return to the drawing board.

Just two years ago, NWF and our partners stopped the Bush Administration from gutting the Clean Water Act entirely. However, millions of acres of wetlands, streams, and other waters are still at risk, including coastal Louisiana and the Everglades region in Florida, habitat for the highly endangered Florida panther. With the help of our members, affiliates, and coalition partners, NWF will continue to press for full enforcement of the Clean Water Act.

### Texas Living Waters

No single issue is more significant for the future of wildlife in Texas than the management of water resources. The state's population is projected to double by mid-century, increasing pressures on limited sources of fresh water. And plans are afoot for new water projects that would harm wildlife habitat—from reservoirs that would flood rare bottomland hardwood forests to a pipeline that threatens the winter home of the endangered whooping crane. That's why NWF is working with its partners to reform state water policy. We are working to educate decision-makers and the public on threats to the state's rivers, lakes, aquifers and estuaries, and we are making great progress. A groundbreaking legislative proposal that would protect river flows and safeguard coastal bays has won support from key state leaders, and measures to reduce demand through water conservation have already become law. NWF will continue its work to ensure that the waters of Texas continue to sustain wildlife for our children and grandchildren.

### A Boost for Wildlife in the Northern Rockies

For years, conflicts between wildlife and livestock have been the subject of heated debate in the American West where millions of acres of public land are used for grazing cattle and sheep.

As the nation's leading advocate for grizzly bears and wolves, NWF spearheaded a program to resolve battles over the most controversial grazing allotments. The program offers a unique and viable solution: retire specific allotments by paying ranchers to secure new grazing lands away from predators.

After three years of discussions, our Northern Rockies office struck a deal to close the Iron Mountain and Ash Mountain grazing allotments. This 74,000-acre area lies just north

### Florida Wildlife Federation



This year, NWF is celebrating the selection of Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) as its "Affiliate of the Year." The partnership has given each organization the expertise and staff-power to make things happen on the local, state and national levels.

NWF recently joined FWF to protect the imperiled Key deer and improve management of Lake Okeechobee which is home to the snail kite, an endangered species of bird. For many years, NWF also contributed to work in the Everglades. In turn, this affiliate has supported NWF's work on mercury pollution by co-sponsoring our Southeastern Angler Summit in Tallahassee and has become an active participant in the Corps of Engineers Reform Network. FWF has even worked with us to stop oil drilling in the Arctic by lobbying the Florida delegation.

"The partnership gives us extra leverage in Florida to fight the many threats that we face here," says Manley Fuller, FWF president since 1987. "We have great relationships with the NWF staff, and we each bring something to the table—from lobbying capabilities to local knowledge. There's a nexus between our work and theirs so it makes sense for us to collaborate. Together, we make a difference."

of Yellowstone National Park near some of the healthiest grizzly bear and wolf populations in the nation. All told, NWF has retired 21 grazing allotments, representing almost 300,000 acres, since the program began. Our efforts have greatly expanded the amount of conflict-free habitat for grizzlies, wolves, and bighorn sheep. And the retirements have been strongly supported by individual ranchers—a “win-win” solution for people and wildlife.

## Keeping the Great Lakes Great

With approximately 20% of the world’s surface freshwater, the health of the Great Lakes is a matter of national and international security. So, when 60 of the region’s leading scientists in an NWF-sponsored report declared last fall that the Great Lakes are experiencing “ecological breakdown” and may be irreversibly impaired, it wasn’t just reported in *The New York Times*, but also in newspapers in China, India, and Australia.

Fortunately, help is on the way. Prompted by the scientists’ report and an NWF-led coalition, federal, state, tribal and local governments joined with 1,500 citizens of the region to produce a first-ever comprehensive Great Lakes Restoration Plan. NWF and the “Healing Our Waters™-Great Lakes” Coalition shaped almost every aspect of the \$20 billion plan, which addresses major problems such as habitat loss, invasive species, toxic pollution, and sewage runoff.

The Great Lakes Restoration Plan, released in December, has now been transmitted by the various governments to Congress and the White House for action. NWF and the Healing Our Waters Coalition have launched a national campaign to win state and federal implementation of the plan. In September, NWF teamed up with our 85 coalition partners to inaugurate the First Annual Great Lakes Restoration Conference, uniting 240 people who care about the Great Lakes, including Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, Senator George Voinovich (R-OH), Congressman Vern Ehlers (R-MI), and the CEO of Fortune 500 furniture-maker Steelcase Corporation. The consensus of the conference was reflected in the Great Lakes Restoration Plan published three months later: restoring the Great Lakes is essential for the region and the nation, and the longer we wait, the more expensive the job will be.

## A Big Win for Salmon

The number of young salmon migrating down the Northwest’s Snake and Columbia rivers to the ocean was up 64% this year. Why? Because NWF and our partners won our biggest legal victory in years on behalf of salmon.

This past May, a U.S. District Court in Portland, OR, ruled in NWF’s favor when it declared the federal government’s salmon management plan unlawful because the plan would do nothing to protect endangered salmon populations. This plan did not even pass the laugh test: It was based on the nonsensical legal argument that hydroelectric dams are part of the natural environment—an argument that, had it been accepted, would have masked the fact that dams kill up to 90% of fish every year by blocking their migration path.

The court also granted NWF’s request to force dam managers to spill more water over four Snake River dams and one Columbia River dam to increase river flows. Young salmon were able to avoid the dams’ deadly turbines and find a faster route downstream, easing their journey to the ocean where they mature.

NWF will continue to push for a viable long-term plan to recover salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest.