



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

What You Can Do to Help Wildlife and Plants

When most people hear the term endangered species, they think of manatees, grizzly bears, whales, and other charismatic species. If these animals don't live in your area, you might think there is nothing you can do to help. However, more than 1,300 species of plants, birds, fish, invertebrates, and mammals are listed as endangered or threatened—some might live in or migrate through your area.

Private citizens can play a critical role in protecting our country's wildlife and plants. The things we do in our daily lives can help improve our lands so they provide a better place for wildlife and humans to live. All endangered and threatened species need your help, from the red-cockaded woodpecker to the Karner blue butterfly.

You can make a difference by reducing threats to endangered and threatened species and their habitats. The following are suggestions to reduce threats.

In your community

To learn about ways you can assist native wildlife, contact your area U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office—<http://www.fws.gov/offices/> or your natural heritage program or conservation data center—<http://www.natureserve.org>

Volunteer at a wildlife refuge—<http://www.fws.gov/volunteers>

Join a conservation organization.

Support natural areas and nature centers and participate in habitat projects.

Contact your State or area fish and game office to learn how you can become involved in conservation—<http://www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html>

Walk, ride your bike, carpool, or use public transportation. Using less fuel reduces the need to extract energy resources and prevents changing habitat that is home to fish, wildlife, and plants.

Organize litter cleanups and recycling drives.

If you observe evidence of wildlife poaching, contact your state fish and game office—<http://www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html>. State agencies enforce State wildlife laws and have jurisdiction over most local wildlife management issues.

Follow fishing and hunting laws. Individual State, territorial, and tribal agencies sell recreational fishing and hunting licenses and have information about seasons, limits, methods, and areas that are open or closed—<http://www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html>

At home

Don't put hazardous substances down the drain or in the trash. Things like paint thinner, furniture polish, and antifreeze can pollute our water and land, impacting people as well as wildlife. For information on how to dispose of hazardous material properly, see the Environmental Protection Agency's guide to safe management of household hazardous waste—<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/househd/hhw.htm>

Take unwanted, reusable items to a charitable organization or thrift shop.

Use cloth, not paper, napkins.

Turn the lights and TV off when you leave a room. Use energy-efficient light bulbs.

Recycle everything you can: newspapers, scrap papers, cans, glass,



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Young volunteers help plant white cedar seedlings.

motor oil, plastics, appliances, etc.

Keep your cat indoors. Roaming house cats kill birds and other wildlife such as field mice, frogs, squirrels, and lizards. Putting a bell on your cat helps, but keeping the cat inside is better.

Don't leave water running. Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or washing your face. Install water-saving devices, such as low-flow showerheads, to save water and save money.

Write, e-mail, or call companies that send unwanted junk mail and ask them to take your name off their list.

In your yard or neighborhood park

For information on working with the FWS to restore wetlands and other fish and wildlife habitats on your property, see the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program—<http://www.fws.gov/partners/>

Remove invasive weeds that displace wildlife habitat. Plant native trees and bushes with berries or nuts that

provide birds and other creatures with food and a place to live. To learn how you can make your backyard wildlife-friendly, see the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program—<http://www.nwfw.org/en/In-Your-Backyard.aspx>. Contact your County Cooperative Extension Service or local native plant society for recommendations. Native species adapted to local climate conditions require fewer resources and less care to flourish.

Keep litter, pet waste, grass clippings and yard waste such as leaves out of street gutters and storm drains. These outlets drain into lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands. Pet waste contains bacteria and viruses that can threaten fish, wildlife, and people.

Learn about natural insect controls as alternatives to pesticides. Grow plants that are natural insect repellents among your flowers and vegetables. For EPA-recommended ways to make your lawn environmentally friendly, visit—<http://www.epa.gov/seahome/lawns.html>

If you use fertilizer, calibrate your applicator for the correct amount. Fertilizing more than the recommended rate does not help plants grow better and may harm them. In addition, excess fertilizer may wash into streams and rivers and can lead to amphibian deformities and deaths as well as excess aquatic plant growth.

Buy or make your own backyard composter for your food waste products like coffee grounds, vegetables, fruits, or other non-animal products. Compost is a natural fertilizer that enriches your soil. It is especially good for vegetable gardens. For information visit—http://www.hdra.org.uk/gh_comp.htm

Pull weeds instead of using herbicides.

Plant a butterfly garden. To get started, visit the North American Butterfly Association's website—<http://www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html>

If you must use pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides, don't throw leftovers in the trash, down a drain or into a storm sewer; dispose of them properly. Visit the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Backyard Conservation website for pesticide disposal information and other environmental



Planting a pollinator garden.

lawn and garden care tips —<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard>.

Put a bird bath in the shade to attract birds that eat insects and pollinate plants—and provide “watching” opportunities for people.

On vacation

Turn the heat and water heater down before you leave home.

Don't pick flowers or collect wild creatures for pets. Leave animals and plants where you find them.

Going abroad? Think twice about the things you buy. U.S. laws and an international treaty make it unlawful to bring many wildlife souvenirs into our country. Visit the FWS Law Enforcement page—http://www.fws.gov/le/ImpExp/Regional_Permit_Offices.htm

In your classroom

Ask your teachers to help you organize clean-up days. Remove trash or invasive weeds from vacant lots or streams. Replant eroding river banks with native trees that will stabilize the soil and reduce the amount of dirt going into the river. This will not only improve the quality of water for aquatic life and humans, it will provide habitat for birds and mammals.

Plant a garden on your school grounds to attract wildlife including birds and butterflies. Build homes for bats and birds, and have the

project certified by National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program—<http://www.nwfw.org/backyardwildlifehabitat>.

Hold a school Arbor Day native tree planting. Invite local officials. Visit the National Arbor Day Foundation's website— www.arborday.org/

Let your teacher know about grants to raise fish for release to the wild.—<http://www.troutintheclassroom.com/>

Explore nature in your neighborhood by celebrating National Wildlife Week at your school. For more information, visit the National Wildlife Federation's website—<http://www.nwfw.org/nationalwildlifeweek/>

In stores or post offices

Don't buy rare or “exotic” pets. Some pets may have been smuggled into the country or taken from their natural habitat.

Don't buy products made from endangered and threatened species. Buy a Duck Stamp to help buy wetlands—homes to many species. See <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/stamps.htm>

In your car

Don't throw cigarettes or trash out your window. Cigarettes cause thousands of forest fires every year. Food trash along roadsides attracts animals that can be killed by cars.

Recycle your engine oil. Contact your local Solid Waste Management Office to find out where.

Keep engines well tuned and tires properly inflated to maximize fuel efficiency.

Consider a career in conservation!

Join the thousands people working to protect wildlife and plants around the world. Visit—<http://www.fws.gov/jobs>

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