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Salazar Announces Nearly \$650 Thousand in Grants to Conserve Critically Endangered Wildlife Around the Globe

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced nearly \$650,000 in grants to conserve and protect 30 critically endangered species in 15 countries around the world ranging from the Siamese crocodile in Asia to the Siberian crane in Russia to the Ethiopian wolf in Africa.

The 24 grants, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will leverage more than \$1.2 million in matching funds from partner organizations.

"The United States is committed to ensuring that birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles not only survive the threat of extinction but also recover to the point where we have healthy populations," Salazar said. "Working with many partners, we are investing in recovery and conservation efforts that will help endangered animals and their habitat around the world. We have a shared responsibility to help safeguard our planet's remarkable biodiversity."

The grants are being awarded through the Service's new Critically Endangered Animals Conservation Fund. They are a one-time global funding opportunity developed by the International Affairs program to augment the Wildlife Without Borders Species and Regional conservation programs.

"These grants are aimed at providing vital support for highly imperiled species and habitats around the world," according to Service Director, Sam Hamilton. "They focus on collaborating with local communities, partner organizations, universities, and government agencies world-wide."

Three of the funded projects are aimed at combating the spread of a deadly fungus, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd), which is wiping out entire populations of amphibians, primarily frogs, in the Americas. These research projects could lead to a cure for the disease that has caused the extinction of nearly one-third of the frogs and salamanders in the areas where it has spread.

Perhaps the most promising project is the attempt to confer resistance to the fungus on affected species through the use of fungal-resistant bacteria. Another will establish a captive population of 40-60 poison-dart frogs to provide safety to the species while the deadly fungal scourge plays itself out in the wild.

On the African continent, steps will be taken to conserve the last remaining population of Ethiopian wolves, which number approximately 450 individuals. The hope is to inoculate free-ranging Ethiopian wolves with an oral rabies vaccine that reduces the devastating impact of the disease conferred upon them at an increasing rate, by domestic and feral dogs.

Of the 24 projects selected for funding, 11 focus on species in Asia, including Oceania; seven on Africa, including

Madagascar; and six on Latin America and the Caribbean.

Nine of the critically endangered species targeted by the grants are reptiles, including the Siamese crocodile, Antiguan racer, and river terrapin; seven are birds, including the Siberian crane, Polynesian ground-dove, and Madagascar pochard; and five are mammals, including the giant sable and the duiker, in addition to the Ethiopian wolf. More than 10 species of amphibians are targeted by the three amphibian projects, including the Panamanian golden frog and other critically endangered poison-dart species.

For more information about this effort and others in the Service's international grants programs, visit www.fws.gov/international/DIC/global/ceacf.html

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