

# Critically Endangered Animals Conservation Fund



Snow leopards dodge snares and conflict with mountain herders. The Bali Starling attempts to rebound from a wild

population of about 100 birds. In Madagascar, the ploughshare tortoise risks entry into the pet trade and the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey barely holds on in forest fragments of Vietnam. These are among the thousands of threatened animal species in the world, and many exist as tiny populations, in scarce habitat, and in need of immediate action to prevent extinction.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Wildlife Without Borders – Critically Endangered Animal Conservation Fund, provides financial assistance to international conservation efforts to save highly endangered species.

Although the biodiversity extinction crisis has been widely publicized, not all species face the same risk. In general, species with narrow distributions and small populations face a greater risk of extinction, including many animals on islands and in habitats used intensively by people. Some of the most common threats to these species include the illegal trade in wildlife, disease, human-wildlife conflict, climate change, and non-native, invasive species. Through the following illustrative examples of USFWS grants, learn how the U.S. Government is contributing to the global effort to help people conserve the world's most threatened species.

## Fighting the Illegal Wildlife Trade.

The ploughshare tortoise (*Astrochelys yniphora*) is one of the most endangered turtles in the world and only occurs in a 30 square mile national park in Madagascar. A single tortoise is valued at \$10,000 in the international pet trade market, the tortoise now numbers less than 1,400 adults due to intense poaching pressure. Park rangers are overwhelmed and the USFWS is helping the Chelonian Conservation Center, establish community-based patrols to improve surveillance and prevent tortoises from entering the illegal pet market.



*Ploughshare tortoise* (*Astrochelys yniphora*) in Madagascar. Credit: Grayson Doss, Knoxville Zoo

## Improving Wildlife Health. In

Pakistan, the white-backed vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) has declined by more than 90% due to a veterinary drug, diclofenac sodium. The drug is ingested by vultures as they perform an important ecosystem service, scavenging and cleaning up livestock carcasses in the landscape. Because the drug causes fatal kidney damage to the birds, the USFWS is helping support the World Wildlife Fund to promote vulture-safe alternatives for veterinary care and livestock producers.

## Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict.

The Andean cat (*Leopardus jacobita*) is perceived by Argentinian goat herders as a threat to their livestock, and in retaliation, the herders kill the cat. To mitigate this conflict and conserve this rare feline, the USFWS is helping support the Wildlife Conservation Society and its guard dog program to better protect goat herds from carnivores. All herders with guard dogs reported fewer losses to predation (contrasted with a control group of herders who reported greater predation) and many are changing their behavior by agreeing to halt the retaliatory killing of Andean cats.

## Adaptating to Climate Change.

African penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*) mothers are abandoning more and more chicks on South African beaches due to climate change affecting the movements of their fish food source. The USFWS has helped the species adapt to environmental change by supporting the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds in their efforts to rehabilitate abandoned chicks and monitor whether penguins released into the wild can establish breeding colonies in more viable locations in a new climate.

## Removing Invasive Species. At

one time, only 50 Antigua racers (*Alsophis antiguae*) remained at one tiny location. Today, the world's rarest snake has increased to more than 500 individuals on four islands. The USFWS support was used by Fauna and Flora International to remove introduced rats that attacked the snakes, and pioneer an education and reintroduction program to ensure the islands remain rat-free.

Since 2009, the Wildlife Without Borders- Critically Endangered Animal Conservation Fund has supported projects that conserve the world's rapidly declining animal species by reducing threats in their natural habitat. Species eligible for funding are those that face a very high risk of extinction in the immediate future, and must meet the criteria to be listed as "Critically Endangered" or "Endangered" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

**Summary Statistics.** From 2009-2014, the Critically Endangered Animal Conservation Fund (CEACF) received 502 applications for financial assistance, or about 100 proposals per year. This fund has awarded \$2,697,392 for the conservation of highly threatened species, while was leveraged with \$4,887,621 in matching funds (a 1.8:1 ratio). The average size of CEACF grants is \$25,000. Based on expected FY2015 funding levels, proposals requesting less than \$25,000 have a higher likelihood of being selected.

Approximately 70 species have been the focus of conservation activities supported by the CEACF. These are the most highly endangered species that the USFWS Wildlife Without Borders conserves. In 2011, for example, the median population size of CEACF species was less than 2,500 individuals, and the smallest population was the 100 Bali Starlings remaining in the wild. Approximately 37% of CEACF grants have been made for the conservation of mammal

species, 35% for birds, 25% for turtles and reptiles, and 2% for fish.

CEACF is the most competitive grants program administered by USFWS Wildlife Without Borders. From 2009-2014, USFWS awarded 104 grants with an annual award rate between 20-25%. Grants have been awarded to conserve highly threatened species in 37 countries, including 11 grants each in Cambodia, 5 in Colombia, and 3 in Mexico.

**Frequently Asked Questions.**

**Are subspecies eligible for CEACF funding?** Generally, no. CEACF provides financial assistance for conservation of species that are highly threatened globally. If applicants can provide a compelling case that a taxonomic assessment is outdated the proposal might be considered.

**Are species eligible that are regionally or locally endangered, but not globally endangered?** No.



*Guard dog pup with goats in Argentina, learning to deter predation* Credit: A Gonzales, Wildlife Conservation Society

**Are species eligible that meet the criteria to be listed as Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, but are currently not assessed, or are listed as Data Deficient or under a lower threat category?** Yes. If applicants can provide a compelling case that the species merits a global listing of Endangered or Critically Endangered, the proposal will be considered.

**What activities are appropriate or a "good fit" for CEACF funding?** Generally, activities that reduce threats to highly threatened wildlife in their natural habitat are appropriate for CEACF funding consideration. See the CEACF Notice of Funding Availability for details on ineligible activities (e.g., the purchase of firearms or ammunitions).

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*Snow Leopard (Panthera Uncia) in the Wild.* Credit: Steve Tracy, Snow Leopard Trust

<b>Critically Endangered Animals Conservation Funding from 2009 through 2014</b>	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	502
Total Number of Grants Awarded	104
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$2,697,392
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$4,887,621