

Endangered animals critique essay

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Endangered Animals Humans are destructive. Not a lot of us think about how what we do affects the world around us. We almost act like we are the only ones on this planet. We go around polluting and destroying our world with no regard for our actions. The things that live out in the wild are paying the price for it. Every day that passes there is another animal or plant that is placed on an endangered list. This is happening at an alarming rate.

Because of man's desire to expand and conquer their surroundings, there are animals and plants that are on the brink of extinction that will not be around for our kids and future generations to enjoy if something is not done about it now. This problem has been going on for hundreds of years. There are animals and plants that can only be seen in paintings or early photography. It is because of our early ancestors that we have this problem today and we have to do more to prevent more animals and plants from disappearing forever. So what is an endangered species? What is an extinct species?

What has happened to cause them to become endangered or extinct? What needs to be done in order to save the endangered species from becoming extinct? Can anything be done to save them? The answer to most of these questions is not known by everyone. With all the attention that this subject gets from the government or groups that fight for the environment, it gets the same amount of disregard from the public. Many people want to help or donate but very few of those actually follow through. This is a very important subject that needs to be taken serious by the public.

It needs their full attention because they are the ones that can truly make a change. People really don't understand the concept of extinction. If <https://assignbuster.com/endangered-animals-critique-essay/>

something becomes extinct, there is no coming back, no reset button. It is gone forever. So it is imperative that things are done to prevent more animals and plants from disappearing. The best thing to happen as of yet to advocate for preservation of our nature's beautiful things is The Endangered Species Act. First enacted in 1973, the Endangered Species Act is one of the most critical laws that have been put in place to protect our environment and the organisms that live in it.

It protects more than the threatened and endangered animals, in fact. When restrictions are placed on certain activities because of their potential to affect threatened or endangered organisms, those same restrictions serve to a degree to protect the non-threatened, non-endangered organisms that live in association with them. Entire ecosystems are often protected. Some, however, are more critical of the Endangered Species Act than they are complimentary. They contend it should either be abolished or greatly paired down. Supporters of the Act, in turn, often argue that the Act should be strengthened.

The intent of this paper is to explore both sides of this argument and to try and reach a conclusion as to exactly what should happen to the Endangered Species Act. The effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act is hard to argue. The US Fish and Wildlife Service Reports (2009) that twenty-two species that are at one time listed as endangered have now been taken off the list as they are no longer endangered. Only two species that were ever put on the list prior to their actual extinction have now become extinct (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009).

Additionally, twenty-three other species that were once classified as endangered have now recovered to the point that they are considered threatened, a less critical status (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009). Less encouraging, however, is that far too many species actually go extinct while they are being considered for listing (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009). Ironically, many critics of the Endangered Species Act argue that the fact that key animals have recovered justifies abolishing the Act in its entirety!

Conversely, it is argued by proponents of the Endangered Species Act that the need for the Endangered Species Act obviously does not end when any one animal is taken off the list. Consider, for example, the case history of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). The gray wolf is not only one of the most impressive of the large North American mammals it is also one of the most misunderstood. The history of the gray wolf since the arrival of the European peoples who indiscriminately displaced both indigenous human populations and indigenous animal and plant populations has been interlaced with attempts at extermination and, more recently, conservation.

The species was almost reduced to the point of extinction before public sentiment would sway to the point where it would receive some protection. First listed as an endangered species in 1973, the gray wolf (thanks to the conservation efforts and severe legal penalties for harming this species that are attributable to the Endangered Species Act) is one of the success stories of the Endangered Species Act. With the upswing in the gray wolf population, however, there has been a consequent increase once again in the same public resentment which almost obliterated the gray wolf from the face of the earth just a few decades ago.

This resentment, and the loss of habitat which seems to characterize so many indigenous species of the Americas, translate to a continuation of the rocky road which the gray wolf has traveled for so long. The plight of the gray wolf can be directly related to the fact that the wolf is considered a threat to man and livestock alike. Although wolf behavior makes them little threat to man the general, the public regards the wolf as a menace waiting in the woods to consume babies and to slaughter livestock. While the former concern is preposterous, the latter does have some basis in fact.

Indeed, wolves have been documented as preying on livestock. There are, however, reasons behind the changes we are noting in the gray wolf's traditional prey regime. Current management efforts for the gray wolf must, in fact, address the many changes confronting the wolf today. These changes include the impact of humans, impacts such as habitat loss, the reduction of prey numbers, and the consequent increase of wolf to prey ratio. In many areas where the wolves natural prey has decreased they have retreated to island like enclaves, some of which are in unfortunate association with livestock interests.

In other cases, however, the wolves still enjoy some habitat that is protected in the name of other organisms that are still on the endangered species list. Proponents of the Endangered Species Act use the fact that the wolf population or any other delisted organism's populations could once again begin a downward spiral. The obvious conclusion is that the Endangered Species Act is anything but obsolete. It is just as needed today as it was when it was first implemented. Another common criticism on the Endangered Species Act is that too many organisms are listed.

Many of the species on the Endangered Species list, for example, are subspecies. Critics of the Act argue that sub categorizing a species and identifying some of those categorizations as either threatened or endangered is unjust because the species as a whole is doing just fine. Ecologically, however, subspecies are important. It is important to remember when considering subspecies that they sometimes occupy a completely different ecological niche than do other members of their species.

Furthermore, they are unique enough physiologically that that uniqueness itself justifies the added protection being included on the endangered or threatened list provides. Another argument that is lodged against the Endangered Species Act is that some of the species have no real value in today's world. Some, in fact, are commonly looked on with disdain by many. Consider, for example, the plight of bats, several of which like the Indiana Bat are included on the endangered species list.

These bats have not only endured significant threats in the past, they are currently dealing with yet another threat. That threat is a disease called white-nosed syndrome, a disease that currently is affecting a potentially serious number of bats in the northeastern United States and possibly in Canada and even Europe. any thousands of bats have already died and others are sure to suffer a similar fate. The US Geological Survey's National WildlifeHealthCenter estimates that as of August 30, 2008 some 100, 000 have died in the northeastern US in association with this mysterious condition.

Some estimates of bat mortality associated with white nose syndrome, however, are considerably higher. Cohn (2009), for example, estimates that <https://assignbuster.com/endangered-animals-critique-essay/>

some 500, 000 bats have died in just the last two winters alone. Cohn (2009) reveals that some populations have been reduced by ninety percent. To understand the full impact that white nose syndrome might have one needs to consider not just how the disease is impacting bats but also how decreased bat populations could impact other aspects of our world.

Bats are one of the primary natural controls of insects that we have. One estimate is that the total number of bats that have already died in association with white nose syndrome will result in a minimum of 2. 4 million pounds of insects not being consumed by those bats (The Economist, 2008). As one article summarizes, the impacts will extend beyond " an itchy evening in the garden. Without bats, farmers may have to use more insecticide, raising environmental worries and pushing up grocery prices" (The Economist, 2008, 49). Another consideration is that if we allow bat populations to continually flounder then potentially dangerous insects will undoubtedly increase in numbers. Many of these insects carry diseases like encephalitis and malaria, diseases that directly impact human beings. In addition to their importance in controlling insect populations, bats are an integral component of their ecosystem in other respects. Many invertebrates and microbes depend on them in one respect or another in their own life cycles. Consider, for example, the importance of guano deposits in the cave ecosystem.

Without those deposits countless number of other organisms would be deprived the habitat they need to survive. Those organisms, in turn, are eaten by other organisms. The impact caused by depletions in their numbers could reverberate all through the ecosystem. So too could the impact of not

listing a species like bats on the endangered species list because of perceptions about their value as an organism! We are, in fact, fortunate as a country because we have the resources to sub categorize our natural world and to delve into the subtle ecological distinctions that sometimes characterize it.

Poorer countries are not that fortunate and one result is that subspecies are not typically found on their lists of threatened and endangered species despite the fact that subspecies are an important ecological element there (Birder's World, 2010). Neither are some of the species that are perceived as less important or desirable. Birder's World (2010) cautions that there is a fine line between too much sub categorization and too little because “ defining too many taxes can create excessive administrative costs and dilute conservation dollars . . . But defining too few taxes can hinder the effective conservation of imperiled biodiversity” (11). Having considered both sides of the argument surrounding the Endangered Species Act, it seems logical to conclude that, despite the fact that they Endangered Species Act could stand some improvement in terms of the speed of the bureaucracy that governs it, the Act itself is quite sufficient as is as long as it is administered to the full extent of its power.

There is a growing tendency in government, however, to undermine the strength of the Endangered Species Act by making decisions on when and where to apply it a political matter rather than an ecological matter (Munro, 2010). To do this is to insure that ultimately it will not just be the environment and the wile organisms that live in it that will lose, it will be mankind as well.