

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



During this difficult and unprecedented year, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE made important progress for imperiled species and vital landscapes across the United States. Here are some notable examples:



GRAY WOLF © ROBIN POOLE

OUTREACH ORGANIZERS led a coordinated effort to restore **gray wolves** to the wildlands of Colorado through a historic ballot initiative. Passed by Colorado voters, the measure directs the state to reintroduce wolves after an 80-year absence.



NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE BY FLORIDA FWCC/NOAA RESEARCH PERMIT #15488

LAWYERS fought to protect habitat from oil and gas development, challenged damaging regulations to bedrock environmental laws, and won a huge victory for **migratory birds** that upheld a key federal law that protects them from lethal industrial hazards.



SANDHILL CRANES © VAUGHN COTTMAN

POLICY EXPERTS shined a spotlight on any attempt to harm wildlife or habitats. Even though we could not physically be on Capitol Hill, we secured \$6.5 million for research and monitoring of the highly endangered **North Atlantic right whale**.

SCIENTISTS from our Center for Conservation Innovation are at the forefront of efforts to achieve the globally recognized **30x30** goal of protecting 30% of U.S. lands and waters for biodiversity and climate by 2030. We released a detailed national strategic report to achieve this goal.

FIELD TEAMS led the way in developing innovative on-the-ground projects that save wildlife—like successfully relocating 27 **swift foxes** in Wyoming for release on Blackfeet Nation lands, where they have long been absent.



SWIFT FOXES © SANDY S. MERVIG



DESERT TORTOISE © MATE RATHBUN

CLIMATE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY EXPERTS sounded the alarm on the threat that climate change poses to imperiled species and their habitats, and petitions by Defenders secured important new protections for species like **desert tortoises** and **fishers** that are threatened by climate change.

DEDICATED CONSERVATIONISTS LIKE YOU spoke up for **polar bears**. Our members and supporters were part of a nationwide effort that garnered a record-breaking 5 million comments opposing drilling in the irreplaceable **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE © TIMOTHY R GRAMS



THANK YOU

This past year tested us like no other. But in the midst of political upheaval and a global pandemic, we have fought hard, developed new partnerships and won important battles for our nation's most vulnerable wildlife and public lands.

Thanks to the efforts of Defenders of Wildlife, endangered and imperiled species are reclaiming lost ground nationwide. Florida panthers are stepping out of the wetlands around the Everglades into new territory, grizzly bears are crossing state lines in the Rockies, sea otters are reclaiming the California coast and bison have dramatically returned to the Great Plains. And across the nation, from the frozen tundra to the arid deserts of the Southwest to the southern Appalachians, we are strengthening our partnerships and working collaboratively to build a stronger, fairer and more representative environmental

movement. This includes standing in solidarity with the Gwich'in people as they fight to preserve their ancestral home in the irreplaceable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and continuing to work alongside community partners in opposition of the border wall.

With our deepest gratitude, we thank you for your trust in us and your unwavering support. Without you, none of this would be possible.



Jamie Rappaport Clark
President and CEO



John Dayton
Board Chair

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE BY USFWS/DANIELLE BRIGIDA



WHO WE ARE

Defenders of Wildlife is committed to a future where North American wildlife and habitats are secure and thriving. We believe in the inherent value of wildlife and the natural world, and our approach is pragmatic and solutions-oriented. We aim to solve conservation challenges by collaborating and engaging with others at the local level, by fighting for the protection of imperiled species in the courts and the halls of Congress, and by defending our bedrock environmental laws, especially the Endangered Species Act, our nation's most effective law to protect at-risk wildlife.

We are guided by three conservation imperatives:

- **PREVENT** species and their habitats from becoming imperiled,
- **PROTECT** endangered and threatened species and their habitats and
- **RESTORE** the health of once-vulnerable species and their habitats.

Guided by these conservation goals and bolstered by your generous support, Defenders of Wildlife proudly presents our 2020 accomplishments.



GRAY WOLVES © LAURA ROMIN & LARRY DALTON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

PREVENT

Defenders continues to be laser-focused on any attempt to undermine the Endangered Species Act (ESA), our nation's best tool for preventing extinction. In 2020, Defenders won two significant victories that upheld the integrity of the **ESA**. We prevailed in our case challenging the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to list the northern long-eared bat as threatened rather than endangered despite overwhelming evidence that the species faces imminent risk of extinction. Once commonly found in the northeastern U.S. and Canada, this bat has been devastated by white-nose syndrome, a deadly fungal infection. The court concluded that FWS's decision to withhold full ESA protections was arbitrary and careless. We also won an important ESA victory when we challenged the constitutionality of FWS's oversight of species found in only one state.

Our win protects the endangered bone cave harvestman, a Texas arachnid, and prevents the undermining of federal protections for more than 70% of the species protected by the ESA.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Defenders is advocating for the closure of markets selling live wildlife and for stronger measures to combat wildlife trafficking around the world to protect public health and safeguard biodiversity. Our actions included signing a coalition letter with more than 200 organizations requesting that the World Health Organization, the World Animal Health Organization and the United Nations' Environment Programme work with governments to close wildlife markets; joining in a letter asking the European Union Commission to request that member countries effectively regulate wildlife trade; and joining



IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE © HOWIE GARBER/DAMITA DELMONT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

a coalition of conservation groups requesting that the U.S. support a permanent ban on wild animal markets that could become sources for future pandemics.

In a major victory for carnivores and ecosystems, Defenders helped secure critical funding from Congress to support 12 nonlethal predator-control positions within Wildlife Services, the federal agency tasked with predator management. We advocated for language included in an appropriations bill that provides \$1.38 million for these positions in 12 states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

On the groundbreaking technology front, Defenders' Center for Conservation Innovation (CCI) team has launched a powerful new application called **Habitat Patrol**, which provides a simple and easy way for officials and the public to monitor and scan vast areas for habitat change. Tracking habitat loss is crucial to protecting species, and this tool will help ensure accountability of federal agencies like FWS and also help them do their jobs better. And providing leadership to the broader conservation community, CCI issued a new report, **Getting to 30x30: Guidelines for Decision-makers**, to identify key issues in achieving the broad goal of protecting 30% of U.S. lands and waters for biodiversity and climate by

2030, expected to be a national priority in the coming decade. The data highlight that federal lands, private lands and partnerships will be essential to protecting the areas that wildlife will need for long-term protection.

To foster collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on beaver coexistence, Defenders developed a beaver habitat suitability model for the state. The model identifies acceptable relocation sites for beavers that come into conflict with humans and pinpoints where beaver dams would support recovery of imperiled aquatic and riparian species. We also began surveying road infrastructure, culverts and bridges in New Mexico to assess the ability of imperiled fish and amphibians to find safe passage, and we started re-creating beaver, fish and amphibian habitat in national forests.



FISHER BY WASHINGTON DFW/JOHN JACOBSON

PROTECT

Defenders won a huge victory for migratory birds when a federal district court in New York vacated a legal opinion by the Department of the Interior solicitor declaring that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not protect birds from incidental take by industry. The judge's resonant ruling begins with a quote from Harper Lee's iconic book *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "It is not only a sin to kill a mockingbird, it is also a crime. That has been the letter of the law for the past century."

Defenders won a landmark victory for the endangered North Atlantic right whale, which is critically imperiled by ship strikes and fishing gear entanglements. This year, a judge ruled in our favor, finding that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) failed to comply with the ESA in establishing regulations to protect whales from entanglements. The judge ordered NMFS to complete a new final rule with protective measures that avoid or minimize entanglement risks. Defenders also played an integral role in prompting the U.S. Senate to increase federal funding for right whale monitoring and protection by \$2 million above the previous year in the 2021 funding bill. The additional funds will also help develop and test new anti-entanglement fishing gear technologies.

Defenders engaged in robust efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, joining with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and a coalition of 11 other groups to file a lawsuit challenging the Department of the Interior's finalization of an oil and gas leasing program in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge provides vital habitat for polar bears and hundreds of other species. The suit alleges that the Interior Department's decision violates the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Wilderness Act and the ESA. We also led the introduction of the Polar Bear Cub Survival Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. We drafted the bill to prohibit oil and gas activities from occurring within a mile of maternal denning habitat, effectively protecting the refuge from drilling.

Thanks to a Defenders lawsuit, a federal district court ruled to protect Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska from a road supported by the Department of the Interior. This was the Trump administration's second attempt to trade away wilderness lands for a road through the heart of the refuge. Izembek is an internationally recognized wetland of global importance and provides habitat for a stunning array of wildlife, including migratory birds, bears and wolves.

After we petitioned the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, it decided to strengthen protections for the Agassiz desert tortoise by listing it as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act. Strengthening protections for desert tortoises is an important step forward for the species' survival as it faces climate change, habitat loss and increased off-road vehicle use.

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES BY FLORIDA FWCC/NOAA RESEARCH PERMIT #15488



Internationally, Defenders successfully advocated for adoption of a proposal by Latin American countries at the Convention on Migratory Species Conference of the Parties 13—a United Nations’ treaty—which will protect jaguar habitat connectivity throughout the cat’s entire range. We also successfully built consensus to protect the endangered oceanic whitetip shark under the treaty.

Defenders played a key role in the permanent protection of nearly 20 square miles of habitat on the Carrizo Plain in San Luis Obispo County, California, to offset environmental impacts from two nearby solar power developments. The area preserved is an important wildlife migration corridor. Many of the state’s endangered species depend on the habitat, including San Joaquin kit foxes, pronghorn and tule elk—North America’s smallest elk species found only in California.

Defenders continued to focus national attention on the ongoing ecological disaster of the border wall, highlighting the plight of seven threatened and endangered aquatic species at San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. An FWS analysis that we obtained warned that wetlands are drying up from groundwater pumping by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Waivers issued to Homeland Security under the REAL ID Act—the broadest waiver ever enacted in U.S. history—exempts the department from environmental and cultural laws.

As part of our national forest campaign, we pressed Gila National Forest in New Mexico to develop a management plan that effectively protects at-risk species that depend on the forest, including the Mexican gray wolf, Mexican spotted owl and Chiricahua leopard frog, and we identified essential habitat that should be protected to advance biodiversity conservation.

A petition by Defenders prompted FWS to list fishers in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains as endangered under the ESA. Fishers face a variety of threats including climate change, rodenticide poisoning and vehicle collisions, as well as habitat loss from wildfires and logging. Researchers estimate that fewer than 300 adult fishers exist in the extremely isolated southern Sierra population.

Defenders successfully worked with the Nevada congressional delegation to ensure that the National Defense Authorization Act passed in Congress rejected expansion of an Air Force testing range in Desert National Wildlife Refuge. In doing so, we averted a destructive giveaway of 850,000 acres of vital refuge lands to the Air Force. We took quick action to alert the broader environmental community, mobilize the public and work with state representatives to prevent this refuge—where by law wildlife must come first—from military training activities and other disturbances.

Defenders was instrumental in the passage of New Mexico’s Wildlife Trafficking Act, making the state the 11th one to pass a law empowering state and local law enforcement to combat illegal wildlife trafficking.

Defenders led the creation of the Okefenokee Protection Alliance, a coalition of over 30 national, regional and local conservation groups devoted to protecting Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge—the largest refuge east of the Mississippi River—from mining proposed along the edge of the refuge. After nearly 70,000 people from all 50 states voiced their concerns, the financial giant TIAA denounced the project and said it would not support mining on its land near the refuge.

RESTORE

In a decisive victory, Coloradans voted to restore wolves to their state, after an absence of nearly 80 years. Defenders worked tirelessly to get the measure on the ballot and undertook a public awareness campaign that included mobilizing scores of volunteers. The ballot measure directs state wildlife officials to develop a science-based reintroduction plan with public input to reintroduce wolves to western Colorado, which has some 17 million acres of public lands, by December 2023. This is the first time U.S. voters have ever directed a state wildlife agency to reintroduce a species. The victory comes at a crucial time since wolves were prematurely delisted from the ESA in the lower 48 states before they fully recovered across their historical range.

Our lobbying efforts helped shape provisions in the U.S. House of Representatives' infrastructure bill to include legislation to establish a national wildlife corridor protection program, provide

millions of dollars to build wildlife crossings over highways, lessen the impacts of harmful roads on national forest lands and restore coastal wildlife habitat.

Our persistence and advocacy resulted in FWS releasing two breeding pairs of endangered red wolves in Alligator River and Pocosin Lakes national wildlife refuges. The release of these wolves is an important step toward rebuilding this beleaguered wild population.

Defenders collaborated with the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana to begin a multi-year **reintroduction of swift foxes** to the reservation, where they have long been absent. Building on our work to support reintroduction of swift fox to the Blackfoot Nation and Fort Peck Reservation, Defenders purchased GPS collars for the project and worked with partners to trap 27 foxes in Wyoming for release at Fort Belknap.



GRAY WOLF, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK © DAVID FRIEND

We developed a new gray wolf range-rider partnership with the San Carlos Apache Tribe in Arizona to support a tribal member working closely with Defenders. The San Carlos Apache Tribe controls 1.8 million acres, which is used by at least three Mexican gray wolf packs.

This summer, agency biologists confirmed that captive-reared Florida grasshopper sparrows released in 2019 and 2020 are breeding in the wild. Defenders has long encouraged direct intervention to prevent the extinction of these critically endangered sparrows. Defenders spearheaded a “Conserve Wildlife” license plate to provide funding to the captive-breeding program, which scientists hope may allow the birds to rebound.

Defenders led a successful campaign in Florida to secure enactment of a law that reforms the legal treatment of heirs’ property and that also has important benefits for habitat conservation in the state. For decades, many disadvantaged families in Florida, including a disproportionate number of African American families, have had inherited real property forcibly sold as a result of a property law known as partition law. The new law restricts partition sales, protecting the public’s property rights and curbing logging and other development that damages habitat for gopher tortoises and other imperiled species.



GRASSHOPPER SPARROW BY FLORIDA FWC/ANDY WRAITHMELL

FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2020, Defenders of Wildlife's nearly 2.2 million members and supporters contributed more than \$38 million for wildlife and wildlife habitat. This figure includes all those who generously donated their time and expertise. The steadfast support of our donors allows Defenders to sustain our program and public education efforts in the field, the courts and on Capitol Hill.

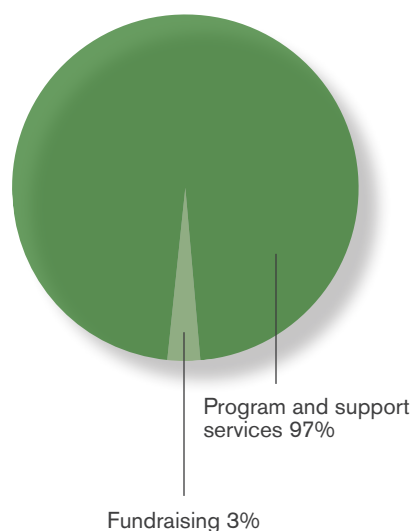
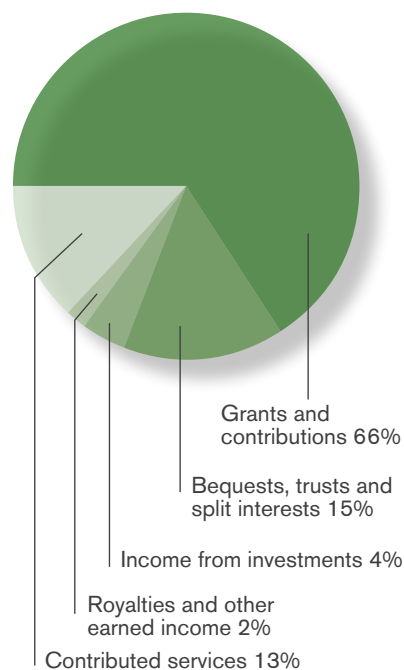
SOURCES OF FUNDS

Grants and contributions	\$26,810
Bequests, trusts and split interests	\$6,272
Income from investments, annuity reserve funds and trusts	\$1,528
Royalties and other earned income	\$864
Contributed services	\$5,299
Total Revenue	\$40,773

USES OF FUNDS

Biodiversity conservation	\$16,975
Constituency mobilization	\$16,151
Fundraising	\$1,202
Management and general	\$5,248
Total Expenses	\$39,576
Change in net assets	\$1,197
Net assets, start of year	\$39,948
Net assets, end of year	\$41,145

Dollars are in thousands.





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WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways to support Defenders of Wildlife and protect our imperiled wildlife. To learn more or donate, contact us at **1-800-385-9712**, visit defenders.org/donate or choose one of the following options.

- Become a **Leadership Council** member with a single donation of \$1,000 or more and enjoy more personal involvement with Defenders. [Defenders.org/leadershipcouncil](https://defenders.org/leadershipcouncil)
- Check with your personnel office or that of your spouse/partner about your company's **Corporate Matching Gifts** program or visit us at [Defenders.org/matching](https://defenders.org/matching).
- Become a **Wildlife Circle** member with a donation of \$100 to \$999 and be a key partner in our work to protect wolves and other wildlife.
- Join Defenders' **Wildlife Guardians**, our monthly giving program, and make your donations easily and automatically through a credit card or checking account. [Defenders.org/wildlifeguardians](https://defenders.org/wildlifeguardians)

- Ask about **EarthShare** where you work and designate Defenders of Wildlife (CFC #10624) for all or part of your gift.
- Include Defenders as a beneficiary in your will, living trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or other estate plan, and leave a lasting mark on wildlife and the world by helping us continue our conservation work. You can specify that Defenders receives a certain percentage, dollar amount or residuary share of your estate.

To include Defenders in your will or other estate plans, provide the following language to your professional advisor: "I bequeath (percentage, residuary share or specific amount or asset) to Defenders of Wildlife (Tax ID: 53-0183181), 1130 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036."

We can also help you structure life income gifts such as charitable gift annuities or charitable trusts that support wildlife while providing income and tax advantages for you and your loved ones. Call us at **1-800-915-6789**, email legacy@defenders.org or visit: defenders.org/legacy.



BISON © DEBBIE TUBRIDY



Defenders of Wildlife is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

Jamie Rappaport
Clark
President & CEO

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Editor

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