



## *Living With Wildlife*

# Coexistence in Action

Conflicts between people and wildlife pose a serious challenge to conservation. In many parts of the country, the problem is growing more acute as development encroaches on wild lands and recovering species return to their historical ranges. Typical sources of conflict include wildlife preying on livestock or looking for food too close to people. Too often, the response is to kill the wildlife, an approach that can threaten the survival and recovery of species and does nothing to keep other wildlife from moving in and repeating the behavior. To protect imperiled and key species on the lands we share, we need long-term solutions that allow people and wildlife to coexist.

### **A suite of solutions**

Fortunately, a suite of nonlethal solutions is available to prevent conflict from occurring in the first place. Defenders of Wildlife has worked for more than two decades to promote and implement these proactive solutions, which include:

- Nonlethal predator deterrents such as livestock guarding dogs, fencing and fladry
- Wildlife-resistant food and garbage storage
- Best management practices for livestock and land
- Outreach, education and technical assistance about living with wildlife
- Research on innovative coexistence tools and techniques that solve conflicts with wildlife

Using these coexistence measures, we can significantly reduce conflict, protect wildlife and provide more effective and longer-lasting solutions than lethal control. Sharing the landscape with wildlife requires more than change on the ground—it requires a change in attitude. The successful use of nonlethal tools and techniques fosters acceptance and tolerance, the hallmarks of coexistence.

### **An opportunity to come together**

Education, outreach and collaboration play a vital role in changing minds and helping communities learn to live with wildlife. Through our Wildlife Coexistence Partnerships program, we bring ranchers, landowners, biologists, communities, conservation groups and federal, state and tribal agencies together, creating opportunities for stakeholders to develop shared solutions for addressing conflicts.

Government programs, policies and incentives are also an essential element of successful coexistence initiatives and building acceptance of sharing the land with wildlife. Defenders champions these efforts at local, regional and national levels. Examples include our work to support and fund programs like the federal Livestock Loss Demonstration Project, which pays compensation for livestock lost to depredation and funds nonlethal predator deterrents, and our efforts to reform the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services into an agency that uses the most advanced coexistence tools rather than relying almost exclusively on lethal predator control measures.

These incentives, tools and partnerships put conservation of species previously regarded as sources of conflict into the hands of the ranchers, landowners and communities that share their habitat. Ownership, leadership and engagement at the community level move us from conflict to coexistence and provide wild species safe passage into the future.

**A prairie dog awaits relocation. To promote coexistence with prairie dogs, Defenders helps relocate entire colonies from areas of conflict to protected areas where they help restore habitat and wildlife, including endangered black-footed ferrets, which feed almost exclusively on prairie dogs and live in their burrows.**



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Working with ranchers on coexistence efforts like temporary fladry enclosures for grazing sheep (left) was instrumental to the success of the reintroduction of the gray wolf (above) in the northern Rockies and continues to bolster efforts to restore the critically endangered Mexican gray wolf in the Southwest. By reaching out to stakeholders and applying a range of proactive tools and methods, we can significantly reduce conflict, protect wildlife and provide a more effective and longer-lasting solution than lethal control.

## COEXISTING WITH KEY SPECIES: Tools and Techniques on the Ground

From Florida to Alaska, Defenders is protecting people, property, livestock and wildlife by using the approaches best suited to the situation.

### Wolves

While wolves account for a small fraction of overall livestock losses, misinformation has created animosity toward this vital and iconic predator. Nonlethal wolf deterrents include using range riders and herders, guard dogs, fladry, fencing, night corrals, radio-activated guard alarm systems, nonlethal ammunition and alternative grazing strategies. Defenders uses these tools throughout the Rockies, including in the Wood River Valley, an area in the heart of Idaho wolf territory where thousands of sheep graze each summer. Since it started five years ago, the Wood River wolf project—one of the largest wolf coexistence projects in the country—has reduced losses for participating ranchers to zero or just a few per year and become a model community stakeholder project.

In the Southwest, Defenders is initiating innovative techniques like timed community calving and multi-ranch range riders and is working with a stakeholders' council to develop incentives for ranchers to coexist with wolves on public and private grazing lands. Defenders is also working with the White Mountain Apache Reservation to adopt conflict avoidance measures and a noninvasive

wolf monitoring incentive program that rewards tribal livestock associations for coexisting with wolves.

### Jaguars

The population of 70 to 100 jaguars in northern Sonora, Mexico, is vulnerable to mortality from poachers and hunters in retaliation for livestock depredation. Improved livestock husbandry practices, electric fencing and other predator deterrents help reduce losses and encourage community acceptance of jaguars. Defenders partnered with the Northern Jaguar Project and Naturalia to establish a Jaguar Guardian Program to minimize conflicts with livestock and reduce retaliatory jaguar killings. The program also pays ranchers for remote-camera images of jaguars on their property, establishing a financial incentive for conserving jaguars.

### Prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets

Prairie dogs' once-vast colonies are now greatly reduced in number, as the burrowing rodents are often shot or poisoned by ranchers who view them as competitors with livestock for grass. Defenders

partners with ranchers and public land managers to create buffer zones that minimize prairie dog movement to lands where they are not wanted. These zones are established by installing portable electric fencing to exclude grazing cattle and allowing grasses to grow taller, which deters prairie dogs as they avoid tall grasses where predators hide. Defenders also helps to relocate prairie dog colonies from areas of conflict to protected areas. Working with partners, we have moved more than 1,000 prairie dogs at Wyoming's Thunder Basin National Grassland and at the Lower Brule Indian Reservation in South Dakota away from areas close to bordering private lands. Restoring healthy prairie dog colonies on lands where they are wanted is critical to the recovery of the endangered black-footed ferret, a predator that depends on prairie dogs for most of its diet.

### Bison

The approximately 4,000 bison in Yellowstone National Park are the only genetically pure herd remaining in the country. Until recently, Montana had zero tolerance for bison that wandered outside park boundaries and sent thousands to slaughter. Now Montana allows bison to roam parts of the Gardiner and Hebgen

basins, and some residents fear the burly grazers will damage their properties. Wildlife-friendly fences that keep bison out of yards, but allow other species to pass over or under, help to minimize these conflicts. By sharing the cost of this fencing with landowners, Defenders is building the support and tolerance for free-roaming bison that is crucial to achieving long-term recovery and restoration to their historical range.

### Grizzly bears

Habitat loss and human-caused mortalities continue to threaten vulnerable Rocky Mountain grizzly bear populations. In an environment increasingly shared by people, grizzlies may prey on livestock, get into garbage, orchards or beehives, or encounter people on trails, in backyards and on ranchlands. Electric fencing and bear-resistant dumpsters, garbage cans and food-storage containers can help keep bears out of trouble. Defenders helps pay for these tools and engages in "bear aware" outreach and education in communities and recreation areas. We also compensate ranchers in bear country the full-market value of any livestock verified to have been killed by a grizzly bear.

*Defenders' vision of coexistence: People are tolerant, accepting and appreciative of the wildlife that shares the landscape with us.*



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GRIZZLY BEAR FAR RIGHT COURTESY LIVING WITH WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (CAPTIVE); JAGUAR CAMERA TRAP PHOTO COURTESY NORTHERN JAGUAR PROJECT/NATURALLA



From keeping wild bison off private lands and bears out of residential areas, to keeping track of jaguar movements with remote cameras on cooperating landowners' property, collaborative coexistence efforts are the key to creating a landscape on which people and wildlife can thrive.



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**Left: A polar bear gets into the garbage. Trash and subsistence food storage sites are drawing bears into Alaskan coastal communities as the sea ice these marine mammals need to hunt seals disappears earlier and re-forms later, leaving the bears stuck on shore for longer periods. Defenders is field-testing food lockers to help communities deal with hungry bears and has brought community leaders, land managers and experts together to learn about a management tool known as diversionary feeding. Top: The endangered Florida panther is limited to a very small population in southern Florida, where roads and conflicts with people threaten its recovery. Defenders works to make roads safer for the cats, help rural residents protect pets and livestock and foster the acceptance fundamental to panther recovery.**

## Polar bears

As sea ice melts, polar bears are spending more time on land and increasingly coming into conflict with people as they travel in search of food and are attracted to food and dump sites in Arctic coastal villages. In 2010, Defenders launched a pilot project with the World Wildlife Fund to provide communities in Alaska with polar-bear-resistant food lockers. In addition, Defenders hosted a polar bear diversionary feeding workshop in 2011 to inform communities and land managers of methods to reduce human-bear conflicts. Defenders is currently partnering with the Alaska Nanuuq Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the World Wildlife Fund to host a polar bear deterrent workshop to provide information and tools to coastal community leaders to help them keep polar bears out of their villages.

## Florida panthers

Only an estimated 100 to 160 Florida panthers exist in the wild, their breeding range currently limited to the southern tip of Florida. With habitat fragmentation increasing these big cats' encounters with people, livestock and vehicles, coexistence efforts are more important than ever. Defenders' strategies include providing funds and volunteers to build panther-resistant enclosures for pets and small livestock and working to facilitate installation of highway safety measures such as slower nighttime speed zones, wildlife crossings and fencing, motion-sensor warning devices and signage to prevent a major cause of panther deaths: collisions with motor vehicles. We also advocate for conservation-minded transportation planning that reduces the conflicts with people and the dangers roads pose for panthers and other wildlife.



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To learn more about Defenders' coexistence work, visit  
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