

Nature at Risk Series

How Late is Too Late?

Recovering America's Wildlife Act & What it Means

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Caption: Eagles have come back from the brink. Thousands more species can be protected from extinction with the passage of the Recovering American Wildlife Act of 2023. (Photo: Macaulay Library)

When the car is rolling toward the edge of the cliff, do you wait and see? Just hope for the best? Or slam on the brakes before it's too late?

Waiting until a creature can be classified "endangered" before trying to save it means waiting until it's teetering at the edge of extinction. A local example: When the American Bald Eagle was declared endangered, there were only two active nests in all of Pennsylvania.

We got lucky. Cutting back on the DDT that was making eagles' eggs too fragile to hatch was enough to slam on the brakes — just before eagles dropped off the cliff.

Plenty of other critters are in big trouble. Right whales and sea turtles. Tigers and orangutans. In some tropical forests, the insects are vanishing.

Not too worried about a few species of rainforest beetles? Or bees? Or bats? Here's why you should be.

It's easy to imagine what would happen if someone pulled a few random pieces out of your computer, or cell phone, or car. After you stopped cussing, a fix would probably be possible.

But life on earth is inconceivably more complex than any human invention. More species are at risk of extinction now than any time in human history. Every single species, every single *creature* has a role to play in the complex web of creation. It is cheaper — and far more effective — to prevent extinction if we act before the car is going over the cliff.

The bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is a step in that direction.

The 2023 version of RAWA would keep thousands of animals from ever being listed under the Endangered Species Act, in the best possible way: through local action to prevent their sliding toward extinction in the first place.

Nature is in trouble. That means humankind is in trouble. It's time to put on the brakes.

*In March 2023, a bi-partisan coalition of U.S. Senators re-introduced Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA). Local and national organizations across the country support it. **Call your U.S. Senators to express your support!***

For more information. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/newsroom/rawa-reintroduced-us-senate/> or <https://www.nwf.org/Our-Work/Wildlife-Conservation/Policy/Recovering-Americas-Wildlife-Act>

*For humans, fish, and every living thing, Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quantity and quality throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member! **www.brodheadwatershed.org***