

A campaign to protect many of the world's rarest birds began in the 1980s, when worried ornithologists began submitting Endangered Species Act petitions to protect more than 70 international bird species. By 1994, the Fish and Wildlife Service had determined that most of the birds deserved protection under the Act, but delayed finalization of listing decisions. In 2004 and 2006, Center for Biological Diversity lawsuits jump-started the foreign-species listing program; in 2008 the Service published listing proposals for five birds and determined that 45 other foreign bird species deserved protection. After another Center lawsuit in 2009, the Service agreed to propose listings for more species, including the six very rare birds that have received final protection. Listing non-U.S. species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act restricts buying and selling of imperiled wildlife, increases conservation funding and attention, and can add scrutiny to development projects proposed by U.S. government and multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank that would destroy or alter the species' habitat.

"We're pleased to see these birds receiving the protection they've needed for so long," said Justin Augustine, a Center attorney. "These birds are literally at extinction's door, and their listing should have occurred more than a decade ago. Protecting them under the Endangered Species Act will give them a better chance of survival, and it will help attract worldwide attention to their urgent plight."

The Cantabrian capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus cantabricus*) is found in northwestern Spain, and its population is likely fewer than 1,000 birds. The Marquesan imperial pigeon (*Ducula galeata*) is endemic to the French Polynesian Marquesas Archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, and the most recent survey puts its numbers at just 80-150 birds. The Eiao Marquesas reed warbler (*Acrocephalus percernis aquilonis*) also lives in the French Polynesian Archipelago and continues to face serious ongoing habitat degradation. The greater adjutant (*Leptoptilos dubius*) was once common throughout much of Southeast Asia, but is currently restricted to India and Cambodia due to significant habitat loss and modification. The Jerdon's courser (*Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*) is a small, nocturnal bird endemic to India and is critically endangered due to past and ongoing habitat destruction. The slender-billed curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*), believed to breed in Siberia, once had flocks reported as hundreds, sometimes thousands, strong. Sadly, the most recent population estimate is fewer than 50 birds.

Source: Center for Biological Diversity, 11 August 2011

Hunters Say Protecting Species Could Hurt Them - Safari Club International claims federal protections for three species of African antelope is having a "detrimental effect" on their conservation. Listing the species prohibits buying and trading the animals for captive-breeding programs, which raise them for hunting, the Safari Club says. The defendant federal agencies - the Interior Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - listed the scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*), dama gazelle (*Nanger dama*) and addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) as endangered in 2005. The antelope-like animals are native to North Africa and are critically endangered in the wild there. The scimitar-horned oryx may be extinct in the wild.

Before the endangered listing, private breeders in the United States charged people to hunt for captive-bred animals here, and raised, bought, sold and traded the antelope for that. The Safari Club says that based on surveys by a breeders association, there were 1,824 addax and 2,145 oryx on private Texas ranches in 1996, and 369 dama gazelle in Texas as of 2003. The 2005 listing included a special exemption for captive populations, but Friends of Animals successfully challenged this, resulting in a 2009 ruling in District of Columbia Federal Court. The Fish and Wildlife Service introduced new permit rules in July this year, which the Safari Club says put new "burdens and obligations" on breeders of the endangered species. The club says the rules may cause breeders to abandon their efforts as no longer cost-effective - which would result in the loss of herds. It says the government listing would cost the world the captive breeding programs that private parties have run at no cost to the government.

The Safari Club acknowledges that it is unclear whether the private breeding programs may contribute to reintroduction of the species in the wild. The club claims the Fish and Wildlife Service violated the Endangered Species Act by protecting captive-bred and raised animals, and by failing to analyze their U.S. range. Safari Club, represented by house attorney Anna Seidman, wants the rule set aside.

Source: Courthouse News Service, Sonya Angelica Diehn, 6 September 2011

Feds to Rethink Listing Status of Captive Chimps - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said it will launch a year-long status review to determine if captive chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) should be protected as endangered. Both wild and captive chimpanzees have been protected as threatened

under the Endangered Species Act since 1976. Activism by Jane Goodall partly contributed to the agency's 1990 decision to split listing of the chimpanzee into wild and captive populations, with wild chimpanzees listed as endangered. Because there are no indigenous populations of chimpanzees in the United States, the restrictions have essentially banned importation of wild chimpanzees except for conservation activities like breeding programs. The Humane Society of the United States and several other conservation and animal welfare groups petitioned the service last year to drop its "split listing" of wild-versus-captive chimpanzees.

"The federal government does not 'split list' any other endangered species by wild and captive populations, and it should not have done so in this case," Humane Society CEO Wayne Pacelle said in a statement lauding the service's decision. "The current 'split listing' allows these highly intelligent and social creatures to be used as living props in silly commercials and stunts, as exotic pets, and as test subjects in invasive animal experimentation, even though most chimps have very little scientific value in these protocols and they cost an enormous amount to keep in laboratories."

The agency's action, a 90-day finding, means that there is substantial information to support a change in the status of the captive chimpanzee population. To actually change the listing, the agency will have to find that the "best scientific and commercial data" warrants listing the populations as endangered under the act.

The public has until Oct. 21, 2011, to comment on the agency's finding before the status review begins. *Source: Courthouse News Service, Travis Sanford, 2 September 2011*

Stem Cells Made from Endangered Rhinos and Monkeys - Scientists have created the first artificial embryonic stem cells from two endangered species, a breakthrough that could help save animals from extinction. Using frozen cells stored at the San Diego Zoo, Jeanne Loring, professor of developmental neurobiology at the Scripps Research Institute, and her collaborators have created stem cells from frozen skin cells of two such endangered species -- the drill monkey and the northern white rhinoceros. The northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) is one of the most endangered animals on Earth, while the drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*) - a West African monkey - is threatened by habitat loss and hunting. With countless endangered animals teetering on the brink of extinction throughout the world, the work of preservation has never been more important. The scientists report in *Nature Methods* that their stem cells could be made to turn into different types of body cell.



Northern white rhino at SDWAP

(Photo by sheep81/wikipedia)

"The best way to manage extinction is to preserve species and habitats, but that is not always working," Oliver Ryder, director of genetics at the San Diego Zoo and co-leader of the study. About five years ago, Loring was contacted by Ryder, who was keen to collect stem cells from endangered animals. Obtaining stem cells by sacrificing the fertilized embryo of an endangered species was out of the question, so Loring tried to think of other sources, but came up empty. A couple of years later, in 2007, teams at the University of Kyoto in Japan and the University of Wisconsin in Madison revealed that cells called fibroblasts from human connective tissue could be coaxed into a state resembling that of an embryonic stem cell by activating a suite of reprogramming genes in the adult cells. This kind of science entails a fair amount of trial and error, and the researchers expected it would work with the drill because of previous studies on primates. But the rhino was a different matter.

Both animals, the researchers said, were chosen because they could benefit from stem cells now. For instance, the drill primate suffers from diabetes when in captivity, and stem cell-based treatments for diabetes being researched in humans suggest the same may work in these primates. The drill is closely related to the baboon (genus *Papio*) and even more closely to the mandrill (*Mandrillus sphinx*). The rhinoceros was chosen because it is one of the most highly endangered species on the planet, with only seven animals, all in captivity, in existence. They haven't reproduced in several years, and because the population is so small there is a lack of genetic diversity, which could affect their survival. If the researchers can use the stem cells to make sperm and eggs from skin cells of deceased animals in the frozen zoo, they could reintroduce some genetic diversity into the population, while also increasing its size. *Source: International Business Times, 6 September 2011*



2011. "Conservation/Legislative Update: Feds to Rethink Listing Status of Captive Chimps." *Animal keepers' forum* 38(10), 535–536.

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