

Back from the Brink

After years of protection, a number of endangered animals are making a comeback.

The future looks bright for some endangered animals! Thanks to tough laws and hardworking scientists, many of these animals are doing well.



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Bald Eagles are making a comeback.

The bald eagle is one success story. The bird became the symbol of the United States in 1782. At that time, about 100,000 bald eagles lived in what is now the continental United States. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs remained.

Hunting and loss of habitat contributed to the decline, or drop in number. However, the biggest threat came from DDT, a chemical used for farming. DDT made the birds' eggshells so thin that chicks couldn't survive.

Saving the Bald Eagles

In 1972, DDT was banned, or not allowed. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was created. That law protects threatened plants and animals. Bald eagles soon gained protection under this law.

By 2006, there were more than 7,000 bald eagle nesting pairs in the lower 48 states. In August 2007, the bald eagle was officially taken off the federal list of threatened and endangered animals. However, it has continued to be protected by other laws.

"It is a good endangered species success story," spokesperson Nicholas Throckmorton of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service told *Weekly Reader*. "Caring citizens have brought our national symbol back from the brink of extinction."

Strength in Numbers

The bald eagle isn't the only species to have seen an increase in its population. Here are some other success stories.

- **Grizzly bears** in and around Yellowstone National Park were endangered as a result of hunting and habitat loss. By 1975, only 220 to 320 bears lived in Yellowstone. By 2007, there were more than 600.
- People used to hunt **Hawaiian green sea turtles**. In 1973, scientists counted only 67 nesting females. 35 years later the number of nesting females jumped to more than 400.
- **Southern sea otters** of California were once killed by pollution and fishermen. There were only 700 otters off the coast of California in 1938. By 2007, there were more than 2,500.