

Act Fights Extinction One Species At A Time

By Rebecca R. Kirtland
National Geographic News Service

WASHINGTON -- In a desert canyon in Emery County, Utah, grows a 5-inch tall perennial with pink and white daisylike blooms. Scientists believe this plant, the Maguire fleabane, is the last one of its kind in the world.

In San Francisco, a rare butterfly, the bay checkerspot, is in danger of losing the best of its dwindling habitat to a golf course. If it becomes extinct, more than two decades of scientific research and government funds will have been spent in vain.

In Florida, the largest freshwater turtle in the Western Hemisphere is literally in the soup. The alligator snapping turtle's numbers are dropping rapidly because of over-harvesting by soup makers.

One Extinction A Day

These are but three of the many species of plants and animals that need help from humans to survive. Scientists estimate that extinction claims one species every 24 hours; some believe the rate might be one every hour by the end of the decade. The Global 2000 report, a 1980 study of world environmental problems, predicted the loss of one-fifth of the earth's species by the year 2000.

School Board Acts On Budget Items

The Hoke County Board of Education Tuesday night decided to offer the Hoke County commissioners a proposed 1982-83 school system budget within the \$874,227 allowed by the commissioners late last month but without the school board's requested \$20,230 for school fees.

County Schools Supt. Raz Autry pointed out, however, the school fees fund if granted by the commissioners could be worked into the final school budget by the October deadline. School board members Bobby Wright and Walter Coley asked the commissioners for the extra funds Tuesday morning. The commissioners postponed action pending further study of the matter and of the proposed school budget's line items.

The proposed operating-expenses budget was changed principally Tuesday night to provide \$76,917 for energy costs, a budget increase of 22.48 percent from the 1981-82 figure for energy. This item is double the percentage increase in funding allowed by the commissioners at the June budget meeting when they added \$38,815 to the school system current expenses (operating funds) budget to advance the total to \$874,227.

The Tuesday meeting was the school board's regular session for July. Members Mina Townsend and Ruth McNair were absent.

Earlier in the meeting, the board members adopted a motion to adhere to the policy of not allowing

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, the most comprehensive legislation of its kind in the world, was authorized by Congress to help arrest this decline. The act, which is to be reauthorized this year, established the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants that now includes 236 native animals and 54 plants. An additional 3,000 plants and 200 animals are candidates for listing.

To list a new species, scientific evidence must be presented that the species is in danger of extinction in a significant part of its range. Additions to the list have stalled recently because of extensive cost-benefit analysis required by the Reagan administration, said Michael Bean of the Environmental Defense Fund.

After the Tellico Dam controversy in Tennessee, where the tiny snail darter tied up a huge federal dam project, the act was amended to allow projects to go forward if their benefits outweighed the potential gain from protecting a species. But mining, forestry, utility, and other interests still want more emphasis on the economic value of proposed development.

That seems unlikely. Bills before Congress to reauthorize the act for three years will amend it to base species listings solely on biological

criteria. The bill, however, will also streamline the exemption process for industry.

Alligators Saved

When an animal is listed, it cannot be harmed, pursued, hunted, transported, or traded. The heart of the act protects habitat by requiring that all federal agencies ensure that their actions, or actions funded or authorized by them, do not threaten the existence of a listed species or adversely affect its habitat.

Occasionally, this alone is enough to bring an imperiled species.

"The American alligator was nearly wiped out from overharvesting but has made a dramatic comeback because its listing prohibited the killing of alligators and the sale of their hides," Paul Opler, chief of listings for the Office of Endangered Species in the Fish and Wildlife Service, said. "We've been able to delist the alligator completely in Louisiana and are contemplating similar action in parts of Florida and Texas."

Man's interference by altering, exploiting, or destroying the habitat is most often the reason that wildlife becomes endangered. Extensive recovery plans have been designed for 52 of the listed species. Most are complex, difficult programs that may take decades to complete, but some have already shown success.

One such effort has been the Fish and Wildlife Service's work with the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, the smallest and rarest sea turtle species. Their numbers have been dangerously low since the 1940s, and they are known to nest naturally on only one beach—at Rancho Nuevo, Mexico.

Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act, the United States and Mexico have cooperated in protecting the beach and collecting some of the eggs to hatch and rear in captivity. The turtles are then released on a beach at South Padre Island, Texas, in an effort to establish a second population.

Many Kemp's Ridelys have been lost when caught in shrimp trawlers' nets. The bill has authorized funds for research that has brought new technology to shrimp trawling, greatly reducing accidental capture of sea turtles.

Whoopers and Condors

Two of America's glamour birds, the whooping crane and the California condor, have received the best efforts that can be mobilized under the Endangered Species Act.

The whooping crane's numbers have increased from about 20 in the 1940s to nearly 100 now. In 1975 the U.S. and Canadian wildlife services began a cooperative effort to establish a second self-sustaining "foster" flock by placing whooper eggs in sandhill crane nests. The foster flock now has about 20 whooping cranes.

Despite years of work with the California condor, scientists have watched the bird slip toward extinction. Fewer than 30 remain of a species that within recent history numbered in the hundreds.

Some species become so rare that recovery programs cannot be implemented. Efforts to save the black-footed ferret were stymied when the last captive one died in 1978 and biologists were unable to locate any others in the wild. The Fish and Wildlife Service even trained dogs to sniff them out of their prairie habitat, but without success.

Eventually, diligence and determination paid off when wildlife biologist Tim Clark found at least 22 of them alive and breeding in Wyoming.

"Anything that has been done or will be done for the ferret is probably attributable to the Endangered Species Act," said Clark, whose 10-year search has been partly supported by the National Geographic Society. "And if the ferret were not on the list, probably nothing would be done for it even though it's been found."

Some species on the list cannot be helped by even the world's best recovery program. There are only five of Florida's dusky seaside sparrows left in the world—and all of them are male.

Living Question Marks

But when it comes to obscure organisms and plants such as the Maguire fleabane, what's the harm of their going the way of the dodo? And what can be done with just one plant anyway?

Bruce MacBryde of the endangered species office explains: "Science has not yet screened this plant. We have not asked it with the language of today's technology how it may help us with tomorrow."

Biologist Thomas Eisner of Cornell University notes that plants are the source of most natural products used today and of vast numbers of chemicals yet unknown.

"The invertebrates, too, are a great unknown," he said. His laboratory has isolated potential heart drugs from fireflies, a nerve drug from a millipede, and shark repellents from a marine mollusk.

In N.C. Miss Black Teenage Pageant

Hoke Girl Miss Congeniality, 3rd Runnerup

Cheryl Farmer, a 16-year-old Hoke County High School student, was named Miss Congeniality and third runnerup in the North Carolina Miss Black Teenage World Pageant June 26 at Meredith College in Raleigh.

She also was chosen for listing in "Who's Who" among American high school and university students.

She advanced to the North Carolina pageant by winning the

title of Miss Black Teenage World of Hoke County June 5. A Miss Cheryl Farmer Day will be held at Rock Hill Church of Raeford by the committee for Miss Black Teenage World of Hoke County, in recognition of her achievements in the state pageant.

She spent the week in Raleigh with Mrs. Hazel McLaughlin and Mrs. Elizabeth McCaskill.

Miss Farmer is the daughter of Margaret and Ernest Farmer of Rt. 2, Raeford.



Thomas Jefferson, the nation's third president, was one of the most accomplished and versatile of the nation's founders. He spoke six languages, was a surveyor, scientist, lawyer, musician, politician and architect, just to name a few.

Curly N Things will be forming a Touch-A-Teen Club. Anyone interested in joining is advised to call Curly N Things, 875-5179 or Hazel McLaughlin at 875-8020.

The club is for boys and girls ages 12-20.

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By David Alan Harvey
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Random rifle fire and violence have scarred some of the sculptures at Angkor during a decade of war in Cambodia. Who wounded this god is unknown.



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