



Red-cockaded woodpecker © Matt Pardue

The State of Species

Around the world, we are witnessing an unprecedented loss of biodiversity, **including in Louisiana, where we support 25 rare, threatened or endangered species.** Specifically, one-quarter of our planet's plants and animals are facing extinction—an intricate mix of grasses, trees, flowers, insects, fish, birds, microscopic organisms and other species that underpin the ingredients for all life on Earth. Nature also fuels the global economy through farming, fishing, logging, recreation and other natural resource-based industries.

While the current situation requires quick and collective action, hope remains. The science says that we have until 2030 to avoid a tipping point. Fortunately, The Nature Conservancy and our partners have decades of successes to draw upon. We also intend to lean on protections provided in the Endangered Species Act, which turns 50 this year. Through such tools, we have the power to ensure a future where people and nature can thrive together.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Visit nature.org/lagiving or mail your check to P.O. Box 4125, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.



The gopher tortoise is one of the oldest living species on the planet, yet it's threatened or nearly extinct in parts of its range. © Karine Algnier

Nature's Comebacks

Celebrating 50 years of saving endangered species

Who doesn't love a good comeback story? While many of our planet's iconic plants and animals are disappearing at an alarming rate, nature boasts some of the most remarkable comebacks on the books. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act in 2023, we have been celebrating underdog species that are bouncing back thanks to this landmark legislation and conservation efforts by The Nature Conservancy, our partners and local communities, where we work to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. From river otters and bison to leopard frogs and eelgrass, we are excited to share stories about species that are on the road to recovery. By securing and managing protected areas that support biodiversity, and advocating for more public investment in conservation, we can't help but feel hopeful for the future. Learn more at nature.org/comebacks.

Our Living Legacy: The Endangered Species Act

On December 28, 1973, the Endangered Species Act became the primary law in the United States for protecting endangered or threatened plant and wildlife species. Its purpose: to prevent species from disappearing and to recover them to the point where the law's protections are no longer needed. This piece of legislation has helped save 99 percent of listed species from extinction, thanks to the collaboration between federal and local governments, Indigenous leaders, conservation organizations, communities and businesses.



Bald eagle © Nathan Lovas/TNC



American chaffseed © Peter Pattavina/USFWS; American chaffseed © iNaturalist/Tom Walker; Longleaf Pine Forest © Lana Gramlich

Nature's Comeback: Louisiana

A rare and unassuming herb comprises one of the Southeast's most productive ecosystems

Listed as federally endangered in 1992, American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*) is a unique perennial herb that draws nutrients from the roots of other plants through an appendage called a haustoria. Once widely common in pine-dominated forests across the Atlantic and Gulf seaboard, today it represents one of the rarest root-parasite species of flowering plants in the southeastern United States, with fewer than 45 populations protected in this region and only 20 of these considered “self-sustaining”. This rarity is mostly due to the plant’s reliance on regular, low-intensity fires known to fuel the region’s longleaf pine forests. While such disturbances once occurred naturally and regularly because of lightning strikes, years of fire suppression on millions of acres has hindered this way of clearing the forest of overgrowth and debris.

It might not be the type of “charismatic megafauna” that attracts attention, but chaffseed plays an important role in the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Will deGravelles, LA Director of Land Protection & Stewardship

American chaffseed can grow and thrive. This work also includes replanting longleaf pine, removing invasive plants and trees, and protecting new longleaf pine sites.

While this plant continues to decline, we are working to protect and restore at least 10,000 acres of key savanna habitat in Louisiana’s longleaf pine forest to ensure the long-term viability of American chaffseed, as well as for gopher tortoises, red-cockaded woodpeckers and the many other plant and animal species supported by this important native ecosystem.

In Louisiana, The Nature Conservancy is working at our own nature preserves and with conservation-minded landowners to mimic historic burning patterns necessary for welcoming sunlight and space into longleaf pine forests so that plants like

NATURE LOUISIANA

Did you know?

The term “Teddy Bear” emerged more than a century ago when President Theodore Roosevelt refused to shoot a Louisiana Black Bear during a hunting trip in the Mississippi Delta.

Louisiana Black Bear Fast Facts



Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) © Ward

Much of The Nature Conservancy’s approach to conserving federally endangered and threatened species emerges from efforts to protect the Louisiana black bear. Once common in hardwood forests and river floodplains spanning West Mississippi, Louisiana and East Texas, this subspecies of the more widely ranging American black bear experienced significant decline when agriculture replaced large swaths of forest.

Overhunting further reduced populations. By the time it was listed as federally threatened in 1992, millions of acres of key habitat had been lost and fewer than 150 bears remained—all in Louisiana. That is when The Nature Conservancy stepped in to work with federal, state and other partners, including private landowners, to restore and connect its preferred habitat so that the species could rebound.

And it did. The Louisiana black bear was delisted in 2016, and continues to recover in the floodplain forests of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers and their tributaries.