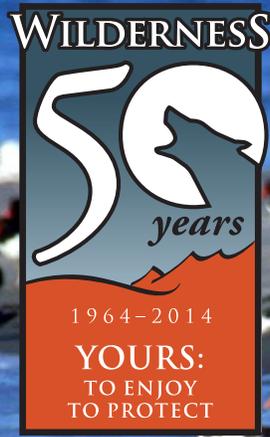


# Wilderness

## Wildlife

The Wilderness Act of 1964 describes wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Wilderness, then, by definition is a place where motorized vehicles are not allowed, where no permanent structures are built, and where wildlife and its habitat are kept wild and substantially untouched by human development or encroachment.



## Why Wilderness is Important to Wildlife

*"What a country chooses to save is what a country chooses to say about itself."*

— Mollie Beattie, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, 1993–1996

By choosing to save wilderness, the United States says about itself that land in its wildest and least disturbed condition is important to the country, and that wildlife, which could not survive without natural habitat, shares equally in that importance.

When wilderness areas were established, the wildlife there and their cross-border migrants responded as expected by going about business as usual. While their homes received protected status the natural cycling of eating, resting, mating, raising young, migrating, dying, all in accordance with the natural rules of survival, continued unaffected. The large mammals—bison, elk and grizzly bear—along with the small animals—pika, eagle and salmon—held their freedoms to share in the uninterrupted drama of America's natural history. As an integral part of the rich biosystems found in wilderness, wildlife had its safe havens—for keeps.

Countless birds use wilderness as nesting and wintering grounds, and resting

places when migrating. Large mammals, such as the bear, wolf, elk, moose, and wolverine, could not survive long without the space and isolation that wilderness offers. Wilderness also protects cold-water fisheries and fish migration and spawning areas—in part by preventing trees at the edges of streams from being cut down, thus allowing them to shade and cool the water. Wilderness doesn't just provide haven for well-known species like the grizzly bear, bald eagle or salmon. By preserving habitat for a variety of species in intact natural environments, wilderness helps to maintain the genetic material needed to provide a continuing diversity of plant and animal life.

For humans, the presence of wildlife in wilderness helps us be more aware of the connection that all living things share, and that we are all a part of the greater circle of life. As hunting and fishing are traditional uses of wilderness areas, sportsmen are allowed in most wilderness areas, excluding national parks. In fact, many hunters and anglers prize wilderness for its exceptional hunting and fishing opportunities, and for the ability to hunt and fish on foot or horseback without having game harassed or habitat degraded by motorized vehicles. A benefit for not only



*...America shows a proud connection to wildlife found in wilderness.*

sportsmen but bird watchers and wildlife photographers, wilderness areas are natural breeding grounds for a many fish and wildlife species and also often hold the largest individuals of certain game and fish species.

Unharassed wildlife living in natural, undisturbed areas like wilderness has the best opportunities to thrive. Providing refuge to big and small animals alike, wilderness allows their populations to escape the pressures of human activities, a benefit that can provide scientists with prime opportunities to conduct wilderness-compatible research on wildlife populations and long-term trends in habitat use.

On a more personal level, many people find wildlife is a source of deep and meaningful personal pleasure. Watching healthy wildlife populations in their daily routines is not only pleasurable but, for human society as a whole, it is also a sharp reminder of our connection to Nature and a prime indication of the health of the environment on which we depend. Wild habitats and their animal residents are truly important to our social and economic well-being.

Americans also connect with wildlife for cultural and institutional identity. As a symbol of patriotism, the bald eagle reigns supreme. The national bird of the United States of America is the nation's

most emblematic animal, included on most seals of the U.S. government with its talons grasping 13 arrows and 13 olive branches. Because the bald eagle is closely intertwined with Native American identity, the bird is a fitting symbol to represent the entire nation.

With a common cultural thread that places reverence on the connection to the natural world, Native Americans display wildlife proudly on clothing, in crafts and art, in ceremonies and on structures.

Across the nation America shows a proud connection to wildlife found in wilderness. On flags, uniforms and playing fields, wildlife is showcased as emblems of pride, strength, quality, resourcefulness and hope. Montana's state mammal is the grizzly bear, for example, an animal proudly displayed on the state flag and as mascot of the University of Montana Grizzly sporting teams. The grizzly is also displayed on California's state flag, representing the numerous grizzly bears in the state when the flag was adopted in 1911.

The Tulalip tribes of Washington state display on their flag an orca, or killer whale, a symbol of strength and power and also of salmon, a major source of food in the traditional life of the Tulalip people.