

# Gaining Ground

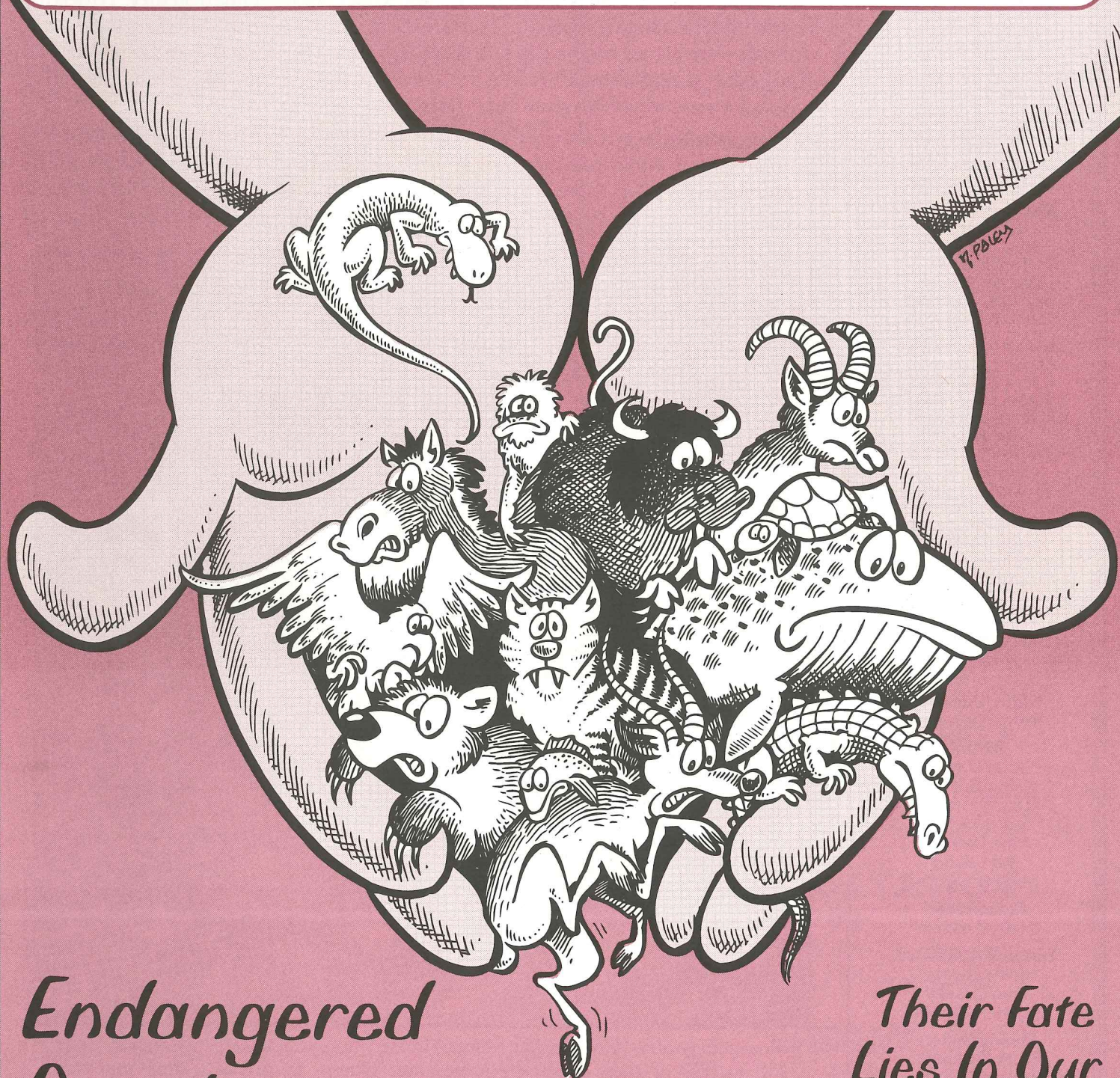


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*Endangered  
Species*

*Their Fate  
Lies In Our  
Hands*

Inside: What You Can Do - Helen Nearing Interview - Legislative Update - And more ...



# Forest Service Adopts Holistic Approach To Species Protection

by J. Scott Christianson

**M**any species become endangered when their habitat is managed in order to maximize one particular species or resource. For example, the management of some public forests to maximize timber harvest has endangered a number of animal and plant species. The management of our National Grasslands for cattle grazing has destroyed the habitat of many native plants and animals.

Furthermore, when a species is declared endangered, a recovery plan is

usually designed to maximize that species, which in turn can imperil other species. Any narrow, one-species-at-a-time approach to natural resource management can lead to a perpetual cycle of species endangerment that ultimately destroys an ecosystem's integrity.

"This has resulted in some large, showy animals receiving the majority of attention, sometimes to the exclusion of other less glamorous but equally threatened and equally important species," wrote Gwyn McKee and Mark Ryan of the University of Missouri's School of Natural Resources in a recent *Missouri Wildlife* article. "Some conservationists are asking whether this is the most efficient way to solve endangered species' problems."

## Enter Ecosystem Management

Ecosystems do not end at property lines. Ecosystem management considers the land-use patterns of the surrounding area when creating a management plan. Most importantly, ecosystem management emphasizes that resources should only be extracted from ecosystems in ways that maintain the health of the ecosystem. It centers on maintaining and enhancing biological diversity, which prevents species from becoming endangered in the first place.

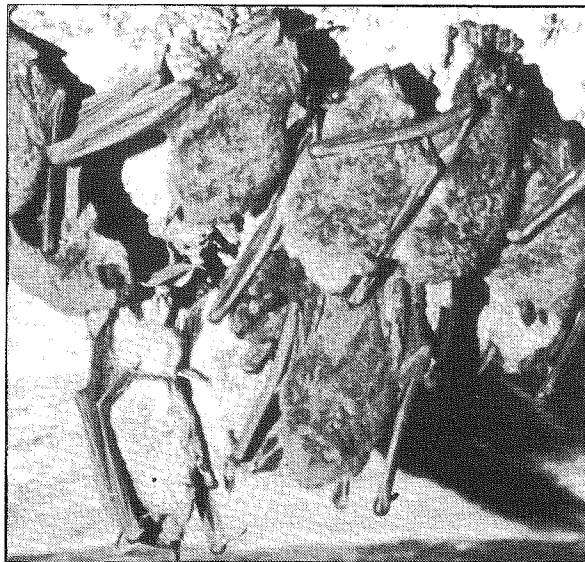
## A New Perspective for The Forest Service

"The Forest Service is committed to using an ecological approach in the future management of the National Forests and Grasslands," said former USFS

chief Dale Robertson last year. He defines ecosystem management as, "an ecological approach that will be used to achieve multiple-use management of National Forests and Grasslands. It means that we must blend the needs of people and environmental values in such a way that the National Forests and Grasslands represent diverse, healthy, productive and sustainable ecosystems."

During the past decade, public trust in the USFS's stewardship of nature has faded. This "new approach" could go far to restore it. Yet wildlife advocates will have to wait and see if any real changes in policy are implemented as a result. If so, the vision offered by Senator Hubert Humphrey at the introduction of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 may finally be realized: "The days have ended when the forest may be viewed only as trees, and trees viewed only as timber. The soil and the water; the grasses and the shrubs; the fish and the wildlife; and the beauty that is the forest must become integral parts of the manager's thoughts and actions." 🐾

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Gray bat populations in Missouri are recovering thanks to protection of breeding caves.

PHOTO: GORDON MAUPIN, MISSOURI DEPT OF CONSERVATION

## Ecosystem Management "Rules Of Thumb"

- **Follow Nature's Lead:** Mimic natural disturbance patterns & recovery strategies.
- **Think Big:** Consider landscape diversity from local & global perspectives.
- **Don't Throw Out Any Places:** Maintain a diverse mix of biological communities & ecosystems.
- **Side With Underdogs:** Prioritize, favoring species, communities, ecosystems or processes at risk.
- **Try a Different Tool:** Diversify approaches, reduce reliance on traditional methods.
- **No Forest is an Island:** Minimize fragmentation of continuous forest and isolation of ecosystems & populations.
- **Encourage Free Travel:** Create a web of connected habitats.
- **Share With Neighbors:** Share information & develop partnerships for common resource objectives.