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Postal Service Commemorates 50th Anniversary of Endangered Species Act with New Stamps

WALL, SD — Nearly 50 years ago, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was signed into law. Under the ESA, more than 1,670 U.S. and nearly 700 foreign species are safeguarded to increase their chances of survival. With the release of the new Endangered Species Forever stamps today, the Postal Service is celebrating not only the law, but also the people, organizations and agencies who have worked so hard to protect and save so much.

The 20 stamps showcase photographs of endangered animals found within the 50 states and American territories, as well as two North American species living near U.S. borders.

“There’s a story behind every stamp, just as there is a story behind every one of these animals,” said Peter Pastre, the Postal Service’s government relations and public policy vice president, who spoke at the dedication ceremony. “We hope the Endangered Species stamps tell the story of hard work, humanity and hope, while raising awareness about endangered animals and wildlife, and the efforts to protect them.”

Scientists estimate that hundreds of species have been rescued from the brink of extinction in the United States since the ESA began. In a process headed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a species found to need protection is listed as either threatened or endangered, the latter defined as “in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

“These stamps highlight just some of the many species that have benefited from the ESA and are emblematic of the diversity of wildlife we enjoy,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams. “The ESA is one of the world’s most important conservation laws, and it plays an integral role in preventing extinctions, promoting recovery of wildlife, and preserving their habitats.”

The photos were taken by National Geographic Explorer and photographer Joel Sartore as part of his [National Geographic Photo Ark](#) project, an effort to document every species living in the world's zoos, aquariums and wildlife sanctuaries. Photo Ark also inspires action through education and helps protect wildlife by supporting on-the-ground conservation efforts.

"When I was a child, many of the species on these stamps were on the very brink of extinction. Thankfully, today they're on the road to recovery. Each serves as a reminder of the ESA's importance, and as a tribute to the dedicated people who have worked so hard to save each and every one of them," said Sartore. "For those of us who care deeply, the loss of even one of these species would be devastating. Besides being living works of art, we believe each has a basic right to exist. And if that's not enough, perhaps this will get your attention: what happens to them will happen to us as well."

On Dec. 27, 1973, President Richard Nixon signed the ESA into law, following a unanimous Senate vote. In the 50 years since, other nations worldwide have emulated the pioneering American initiative. The ESA provides a framework for conserving and protecting endangered and threatened species and their habitats both domestically and abroad.

Many of the animals featured on these stamps were photographed in zoos. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is committed to being a global leader in promoting species conservation and animal wellbeing by leveraging the size, scope, expertise and public trust of its member facilities.

"Zoos and aquariums accredited by AZA have worked tirelessly to save and restore endangered species. We celebrate the ESA by educating millions of visitors on the beauty and importance of the natural world and the animals that call it home," said Becky Dewitz, CEO, Great Plains Zoo and incoming member of AZA's Board of Directors. "We are so proud to have some of the animals we care for featured in Joel's stunning photography and commemorated in the postage stamps we unveil today."

From May 19 to June 9, all First-Class Mail bearing postage stamps will be postmarked with an image of a black-footed ferret and the words: "Protect Endangered Species."



Derry Noyes, an art director for the Postal Service, designed the stamps using Sartore's photographs.

The Endangered Species Forever stamps are issued in panes of 20. News of the stamps is being shared with the hashtags **#EndangeredSpeciesStamps** and **#ESA50**.

Postal Products

Customers may purchase stamps and other philatelic products through the [Postal Store](#) at usps.com/shopstamps, by calling 844-737-7826, by mail through [USA Philatelic](#) or at Post Office locations nationwide.

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Please Note: The United States Postal Service is an independent federal establishment, mandated to be self-financing and to serve every American community through the affordable, reliable and secure delivery of mail and packages to nearly 165 million addresses six and often seven days a week. Overseen by a bipartisan Board of Governors, the Postal Service is implementing a 10-year transformation plan, [Delivering for America](#), to modernize the postal network, restore long-term financial sustainability, dramatically improve service across all mail and shipping categories, and maintain the organization as one of America's most valued and trusted brands.

The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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