



# WILD Kids



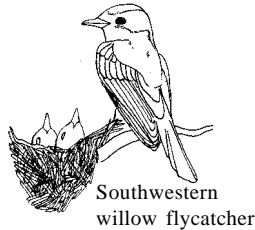
## Endangered Wildlife in Arizona

More than 800 different kinds of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals live in Arizona. Of these, about 40 are threatened or endangered species. An **endangered** species is one that is in danger of becoming extinct in all or most of its range. **Extinct** means there are no more animals

of that species, in the wild or in zoos. An extinct species can be thought of as “gone forever.” A **threatened** species is one that is likely to become endangered in the future. There are many reasons why animals become endangered, but the main reason is loss of habitat.

### Habitat Loss

Habitat provides everything an animal needs to survive: food, water, shelter and space. If an animal’s habitat is changed, and it can’t find the food, water, and shelter it needs, it may become endangered. Wildlife habitat is changed or lost when forests are cleared, roads are built through wetlands, or when rivers are dammed. Habitat loss is the biggest problem for wildlife today.

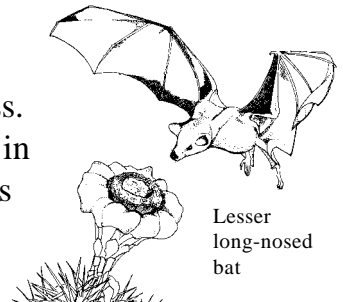


Southwestern willow flycatcher

The Southwestern willow flycatcher is endangered due to loss of habitat. This bird’s scientific name means “mosquito king” because of the large number of insects it eats! The Southwestern willow flycatcher lives in riparian areas (near streams). Riparian areas are disappearing as people pump water out of the ground and dam rivers.

The Southwestern willow flycatcher has another problem - the cowbird. The cowbird is a nest **parasite** of the flycatcher. It lays its egg in the flycatcher’s nest then flies away, letting the flycatcher feed and raise its young! Because the cowbird chick is bigger than the flycatcher chicks, it gets more food. The flycatcher chicks may not get enough food to survive.

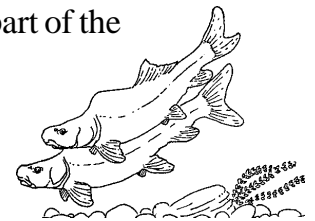
The Lesser long-nosed bat, a nectar-feeding bat, is also endangered due to habitat loss. This bat lives in large groups in caves and mines. When mines are closed or gated to keep people out, this can also prevent the bats from using the mine. Another threat to the lesser long-nosed bat is the disappearance of one of its main food sources, the agave plant. When people cut down agave plants, an important part of the bat’s habitat is lost.



Lesser long-nosed bat

### Introduced Competition

Many of our native fish are endangered because fish from other places have been introduced (brought in) to Arizona. The introduced fish (flathead catfish, mosquitofish, etc.) often eat native fish or their eggs, and compete with native fish for food. Other threats to native fish include loss of aquatic (water) habitat and damming of rivers, which changes the temperature of the water. The Razorback sucker is an endangered fish that can live 40 years or more. But few of them reach adulthood because introduced fish eat young razorbacks.

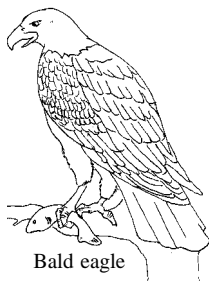


Razorback sucker

Food + Water + Shelter + Space = Habitat

## Contaminants

Insecticides and other chemicals can contaminate (pollute) the air and water, making it unhealthy for wildlife. The bald eagle and peregrine falcon were affected by insecticides. Bald eagles ate fish that had eaten insects sprayed with insecticides. The insecticide, DDT, caused eagles to lay thin-shelled eggs. When the eagles sat on their eggs, the shells cracked. This caused a decrease in the number of bald eagles. In Arizona, bald eagles are also threatened by loss of habitat.



Bald eagle

## Disease

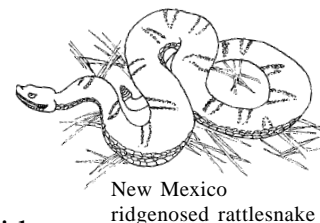
Usually, disease does not cause a species to become endangered. But in the case of the black-footed ferret, disease added to the ferret's problems. Black-footed ferrets were already in trouble because prairie dogs, their main food source, were being poisoned and killed. As the number of ferrets decreased, it didn't take long for a disease called distemper to nearly wipe out the few existing ferrets. But, a small group of ferrets survived and were brought into zoos. In 1996, The black footed was reintroduced to Arizona.



Black-footed ferret

## Exploitation

One type of exploitation is when too many animals are taken from the wild to be sold as pets or studied for research. The New Mexico ridgenosed rattlesnake is found only in a few places in Arizona. Because it is a rare snake, an illegal trade has developed for snake collectors that may further threaten the Arizona population.

New Mexico  
ridgenosed rattlesnake

Another type of exploitation is when too many animals of a species are killed or poisoned, as in the case of the Mexican gray wolf. In the early 1900's, Mexican wolves were common in Arizona. About this time settlers arrived, bringing livestock (cows and sheep) with them. The settlers competed with wolves for the same prey animals (elk and deer). As elk and deer populations decreased, wolves sometimes killed livestock. As a result of this, wolves were viewed as a threat and were hunted and trapped until there were no more wolves in the southwest.

In 1998, the Mexican gray wolf was reintroduced (brought back) to Arizona. To find out more about the Mexican wolf reintroduction program, read WILD Kids #19. (For a copy, call 602-789-3220.)

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## Research an Endangered Species in Arizona

Write a report or make a drawing of an endangered species in Arizona.

1. Use the library, internet and other resources, to research a threatened or endangered species found in Arizona.
  2. Find out why the animal is threatened or endangered. For example, is it because of habitat loss, contaminants, introduced competition, exploitation, disease, or other causes.
  3. In your report be sure to include a description of the animal's habitat.
  4. Draw a picture of the animal in its habitat. Include its food, water and shelter.
  5. For more information, check the Arizona Game and Fish Dept. website at [www.azgfd.com](http://www.azgfd.com)
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