

irreplaceable

Wildlife in a Warming World

Read about our awe-inspiring species. Peer into the world of these plants and animals and learn their fascinating stories. Discover what makes them truly irreplaceable.

Global Warming is Affecting Wildlife Today

Scientists now predict that temperatures will increase between 2.5 and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century, faster than any warming for thousands of years. Many people are familiar with the plight of the polar bear, struggling as the sea ice it depends on melts away. But climate change threats reach well beyond the Arctic: habitats and ecosystems are being fundamentally altered all around us, threatening species even in our own backyards.

Northeast Species At Risk



Moose: Facing new pests and parasites

Sporting the largest antlers in the world, a moose can be more than six feet tall at the shoulder and weigh 1,800 pounds. Moose are so tall they prefer to eat shrubs and tall grasses because grazing on the ground can be difficult! Warming temperatures have led to an explosion of white-tailed deer population in some areas, which carry a parasitic worm that is devastating to moose. Global warming is also allowing dog ticks to expand northward in Maine, which hurts moose in the Northeast.

Atlantic Lobsters: In hot water

An enduring New England icon, the Atlantic lobster has long been a mainstay of local economies and livelihoods along the northeast coast. These highly-prized crustaceans can live up to 50 years and will develop a stronger left or right claw for crushing their food. As tough as they may look, a 1999 major lobster die-off in the Long Island Sound sounded alarm bells that these crustaceans are actually more vulnerable to disease in warmer waters. As ocean temperature rises, lobsters need more oxygen to survive and have a harder time fighting off infections. Uncomfortably warm water will likely drive the lobster entirely out of southern New England and into the Gulf of Maine.



Visit www.irreplaceablewild.org to learn more

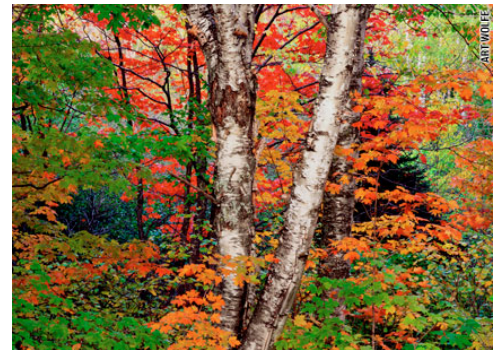


Piping Plovers: Fighting the rising tide

With a series of characteristic peeps, the piping plover tucks its eggs in sandy beaches and gravel along the Atlantic coast, the shores of the Great Lakes, and parts of the Midwest and Canada. Flooding is already a major cause of nest failure in piping plovers, and rising sea levels threaten to overwhelm these fragile nests even further. The plover's plight is shared by many other shorebirds, such as gulls, terns, and skimmers who nest on coastal beaches and would be harmed by rising seas.

Sugar Maples: A vanishing symbol of autumn

The sugar maple lends its lively fall colors to New England and provides sap to make delicious maple syrup. These trees have thrived in this region where the winter climate is perfect for promoting sap production. However, a projected 6 to 10 degree temperature rise would bring spring early and prematurely halt sap production. Sugar maples cannot handle drier, warmer conditions, and could be replaced by species such as oak, hickory, and pine. If that happens, New England would lose one of its most enduring symbols of autumn.



Canada Lynx: Pressured by new competitors

Rare in the lower 48 states, the shy, stealthy lynx stalks the mountainous forests of the northern United States for rabbits, birds, and other small prey. Equipped with big, padded paws that serve as snowshoes and an excellent sense of smell and sight, lynx have evolved to chase their prey on snowy terrain. Global warming, however, may spell dire consequences for the lynx as diminished snowfalls allow other predators such as coyote to move in and squeeze the lynx out of its native habitat.

What's the answer?

While this information is sobering, there is still time to act. Some answers we already know: we need to reduce the impacts of pollution, invasive species, and habitat destruction, restore migration corridors and protect key habitat areas, and, of course, stop global warming! Other solutions will take more research, time, money, and dedication to develop and implement. But together, we know we can get there.

You can help: Visit us online at www.irreplaceablewild.org to:

- Sign our national Call to Care, urging our leaders to help wildlife struggling in a warming world;
- Check out more ways to get involved, like writing to your local paper, or taking part in a unique photo petition;
- View our online gallery of wildlife photography, and send ecards to your friends to get them involved;
- Learn about simple things you can do to help, like saving energy, creating backyard habitat, and more!

For more information, contact Endangered Species Coalition coordinator Tara Thornton (tthornton@stopextinction.org) (207) 268-2108.