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“IRREPLACEABLE: WILDLIFE IN A WARMING WORLD” CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF IN PROVIDENCE, RI, APRIL 3-26

First-Ever, Multi-City Campaign to Educate Public about Species Imperiled by Global Warming, Features Traveling Exhibit by Award-winning Wildlife Photographers

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island – March 31, 2008 -- Faith, science, art, and justice groups are uniting in a national campaign to protect plants and animals threatened by global warming. The campaign, titled *“Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World,”* brings the public face-to-face with the wildlife most threatened by climate change – from the iconic polar bear to Rhode Island’s own piping plover. Featuring award-winning work by wildlife photographers and the voices of faith, science, and justice leaders, the exhibit and related events will tell the story of how plants and animals are struggling to adapt to a rapidly warming world. The 40-print exhibit, illustrating both the wonder and fragility of our nation’s wildlife, debuts in Rhode Island during the month of April (April 3-26) at the Peerless Building in downtown Providence. The campaign is presented by [Earthjustice](#), [Noah Alliance](#), [International League of Conservation Photographers](#) (ILCP), [Conservation International’s Center for Applied Biodiversity Science](#) (CABS) as well as local partners.

Time is Now

Scientists have predicted that global warming will become a leading cause of species extinction in the coming decades: The latest United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report approximates that **20 to 30 percent of animal and plant species could be at an increased risk of extinction**, with up to 60 percent species loss in some areas if global warming continues unabated.

Rhode Island is home to an incredible diversity of native wildlife species, including 277 birds, 53 mammals, 37 fish, 25 reptiles and 18 amphibians. As a small coastal state, Rhode Island will be disproportionately affected by rising seas triggered by global warming, changing the makeup of entire ecosystems and forcing wildlife to shift their ranges or adapt. Rhode Island’s nearly 400 miles of coastline is particularly susceptible to destruction as sea level rises and barrier reef islands are stressed.

As climate change continues to increase storm intensity, it reduces overall coastal habitat supporting diverse sea life and migratory waterfowl. Already, coastal erosion and storm surges have damaged many of the state's tidal flats and dunes, including those on Block Island and throughout the Rhode Island Refuge Complex, home to the savanna sparrow, northern harrier hawk and the imperiled piping plover (federally listed as threatened and endangered since 1986). Plovers need inter-tidal mud flats and tidal rivers for feeding, dune grass for resting and hiding, and intact dune systems with frontal dunes and sandy pits for nesting. Sea level rise and increased flooding has meant a loss of habitat for several shorebirds, not only the piping plover, but also gulls, terns, and skimmers who nest on coastal beaches.

To address these threats, Rhode Island state policy makers, including State Representative Art Handy, have taken the lead in bringing forth legislation such as the Rhode Island [Global Warming Solutions Act](#), which calls for stronger enforcement on statewide emissions on par with California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Washington.

Climate change is transforming the planet from the Arctic to Rhode Island. Rising temperatures are altering habitats, causing ripples up and down the food chain and demonstrating just how interconnected the creatures of this planet are. As sea ice disappears in the Arctic, polar bear habitat is literally melting away and species in Rhode Island are threatened by degrading coastal habitats.

"Global warming has emerged as the most pressing challenge facing the world today. Our nation's wildlife -- from the Arctic's polar bears to Rhode Island's piping plovers -- are being affected and we will be judged by future generations on how we respond." said Trip Van Noppen, executive director of Earthjustice. "Our coalition of faith, science, art and justice partners has united for this exact purpose: to protect imperiled wildlife from the threats of a warming world."

"All faith traditions teach that we are called to care for the vulnerable. And in today's world, this includes species suffering because of climate change," said Suellen Lowry, Noah Alliance program director. "Scripture tells us that wildlife and habitat matter. Science and common sense tell us that people's well-being is intertwined with the world's biological diversity -- for our food, clean water, medical advances. So, for the sake of God's marvelous world, and its people, plants, and wildlife, we must take action."

"We capture images to talk about a world that is disappearing," stated Cristina Mittermeier, executive director of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP). "We hope the inspiring story they tell motivates the public to tackle the challenge of climate change. Once we lose these species, we can never bring them back."

“Our massive destruction of tropical forest, freshwater, and marine habitats, plus climate change, are driving species extinctions a thousand times faster than normal,” said Thomas Brooks, senior scientist at the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science at Conservation International. “To get a sense of the catastrophe, imagine a thousand-fold increase in tsunami frequency, or in any other natural rate. We hope this campaign will inspire people to action to stop the extinction crisis.”

About the *Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World* Campaign:

The *Irreplaceable* Campaign educates the public and policy-makers on global warming’s impact on wildlife. A collaboration of art, justice, science, and faith groups, we aim to inspire hope, wonder, and action through the beauty and power of images.

The Exhibit opens April 3 in Providence, Rhode Island at the Peerless Building (150 Union Street) in downtown Providence. Admission is free. There will be a variety of special activities including VIP events, forums, films, discussions, and tours that will be held in conjunction with the exhibit. For a complete schedule, visit www.irreplaceablewild.org.

The traveling exhibit will be presented in several regions throughout the country with the following schedule:

- May 08: Missoula, Montana
- July 08: Seattle, Washington
- Sept. 08: San Francisco, CA
- Jan. 09: Los Angeles, CA
- Feb. 09: New York, NY
- April 09: Washington, DC

About the campaign partners:

Earthjustice (www.earthjustice.org)- Earthjustice is a non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to protecting the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment. It brings about far-reaching change by enforcing and strengthening environmental laws on behalf of hundreds of organizations and communities.

Noah Alliance (www.noahalliance.org)- The Noah Alliance is a collaboration of Jewish, Evangelical, Protestant, and other religious community organizations, and individual people of faith, that are concerned about the protection of endangered species and biological diversity. It seeks to provide a service by facilitating education and action among members of the religious community who are concerned about the most imperiled species. The members of the Noah Alliance include Restoring Eden, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the Academy of Evangelical Scientists and Ethicists.

International League of Conservation Photographers (www.ilcp.com)- The International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) is a consortium of professional photographers, known as Fellows, who have demonstrated the highest skills in photography, outstanding ethical standards in the capture, manipulation and captioning of images, and a sustained commitment to conservation. Its mission is to further environmental and cultural conservation through photography.

The Center for Applied Biodiversity Science (CABS), (<http://science.conservation.org>) the scientific hub of Conservation International, works to link science and action to guide the conservation of nature worldwide. Founded in 1999 with generous support from the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#), CABS brings together a staff of more than 70 research scientists who are highly respected in their fields and dedicated to saving our biodiversity.

Local Partners

The Rhode Island Climate Coalition (RICC) is a group of 79 organizations that includes unions, businesses and community groups working to reduce global warming pollution and ensure that Rhode Island meets its goals for global warming pollution reductions. RICC is part of the New England Climate Coalition, <http://www.newenglandclimate.org/rhodeisland.htm>

The Endangered Species Coalition is a national network of hundreds of conservation, scientific, sporting, religious, humane, business and community groups across the country. Through public education, scientific information and citizen participation, we work to protect our nation's wildlife and wild places. The ESC is a non-partisan coalition working with concerned citizens and decision makers from all parties to protect endangered species and habitat.

People's Power & Light is an organization working to protect the interests of residential energy consumers and the environment. PP&L is dedicated to energy that is affordable, safe, and clean for our families and the environment through energy efficiency, renewable energy, education, and advocacy. http://www.ripower.org/PPL_index.htm

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