

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Study Units

[Iowa's Wildlife Resource Base; Wildlife Management](#)

Supplemental Information

Species extinction is analogous to a machine losing pieces. The machine can keep running for a while, even if it is missing a bolt, washer, or other seemingly nonessential part. But if parts keep falling off, how long can it go on functioning? Would you want to fly on an airplane after someone had spent an hour removing small rivets from the wing?

That is what is happening on earth. Small parts of our working ecosystems are being lost. How long can all the systems that support life continue to operate, while losing pieces? This analogy can also be used to describe the effects when an endangered species is able to recover. If we save all the pieces, we can make the machine work again.

See the background information in [Iowa's Wildlife Resource Base](#) and [Wildlife Management](#) for information and links on endangered and threatened species in Iowa. Many species reintroduced or given protection through regulations are ones many students (and adults) didn't know were ever gone from the state (e.g., white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, giant Canada geese, beaver, river otters, and peregrine falcons). We may be amazed in the future at which species, once endangered or extirpated, will become working pieces of Iowa's ecosystem again.

Several factors have contributed to successes with species reintroduction. Habitat preservation and reconstruction are essential. Changes in human behaviors and attitudes toward these species often are necessary for successful reintroductions. Laws now protect deer, turkey, geese, and beaver. They cannot be harvested during their breeding seasons and limits are set on the numbers taken during hunting and trapping seasons.

Teaching Suggestions

Read "On a Monument to a Pigeon" from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. He writes of the extinct passenger pigeon. This essay conveys a sense of the importance of trying to save endangered species. It may inspire students to write their own essays on how they would feel if a species now endangered became extinct. Endangered means there's still time, extinct is forever.

Use the PDF lists of endangered and threatened species ([links found on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources \(DNR\) website](#)) in Iowa as starting points for the students' investigations. As more data is gathered, endangered and threatened lists are revised. Select wildlife species that have been extirpated from Iowa and do an Internet search to find out more about factors that led to their extirpation.

Which ones have returned or been reintroduced? See the activity, [Back from the Brink](#).



Evaluation

See the activity. Have students list species of wildlife that have been successfully reintroduced in Iowa.

Student Materials

- Here Today, Gone Tomorrow... Back Again
- [Iowa Department of Natural Resources: Conservation](#) – Lists of Iowa's threatened and endangered species as well as definitions of both.

Teacher Aids

None

Additional Materials

- [Iowa Habitat Loss and Disappearing Wildlife](#) an Iowa Association of Naturalists' publication about Iowa habitat loss and species loss.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service ([FWS](#)) [federally endangered species information](#)
- US Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)) [endangered species protection program](#)
- Dinsmore, J.J. 1994. *A Country So Full of Game*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Galan, M. 1997. *There's Still Time; The Success of the Endangered Species Act*. Washington DC: National Geographic Society.
- Leopold, A. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Learn more about [A Sand County Almanac](#), the [Leopold Education Project](#), and [Aldo Leopold](#) from the Aldo Leopold Foundation.



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Animal Species					
Factors affecting status					
Part or role in the system					
Reintroduced					
Threatened State / Federal					
Endangered State / Federal					
Extinct					

