

Creature Feature

Forests, rivers, canyons, deserts, tundra, rangelands: With so many wildlife habitats on BLM lands, you can be sure that all sorts of wildlife can be found there. BLM needs to protect animal habitats on the land it manages and still allow for other uses.

Loss of habitat is the reason most animals become endangered. And many things people do can cause loss of habitat. New homes, roads, and shopping malls often force animals from their homes. Damming a river to provide power or water for farms and cities threatens habitat for fish and all wildlife dependent on that river. Logging and mining operations can destroy wildlife habitats as well. And the spread of invasive weeds can threaten the food supply and shelter for native animals.

Tourists can also pose a threat to wildlife. As more people visit public lands, there's a greater chance that wildlife will be disturbed and their habitat damaged. People who use off-highway vehicles (OHVs) have to be particularly careful. OHVs include motorcycles, trail bikes, snowmobiles, four-wheel drive vehicles, and other vehicles that can be driven off paved roads. People on OHVs can travel farther into remote areas, where there's a better chance to see wildlife . . . and a better chance to disturb animals. That's why BLM has set aside trails on some of its lands for OHV use. By staying on the trails, OHV riders are less likely to disturb animals and their habitats.

—Endangered Species—

To find out more about endangered species in your state, check out the website of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: www.fws.gov. Next, click on "Endangered Species." By clicking on "Species Information," you'll be able to get to the latest information on endangered plants and animals as well as lists of species that are threatened and endangered in your state. Then check with your local BLM office to find out what you can do to help.

OHVs are not the only problem. If you've visited BLM lands by car, by bike, or on foot, you've probably noticed that there are trails and designated parking areas in many places as well. These are designed to keep people from spreading out all over wildlife habitat. You wouldn't want all sorts of people walking through your home, would you? When you think about it, public lands do belong to people, but they also belong to the plants and animals that live there.