

Opinion: Interior appropriations bill's extinction rider is bad

By Elly Pepper, Natural Resources Defense Council

Have you ever tried to explain extinction to a kid? It's not easy. You'll inevitably get questions like: "There isn't even one?" "Couldn't they come back some day?" "So I won't ever get to see one?" They just can't fathom that something could be completely erased from nature.

I can see where they're coming from – the permanence of extinction is hard to wrap your head around. And it's what makes it so disturbing that the GOP is messing with a law that prevents extinction in a must-pass budget bill.

Indeed, the 2012 House Interior Appropriations bill contains a rider that would bar all new listings of endangered species and critical habitat designations (p. 8), but allow the delisting and downlisting of species. While Rep. Dicks, D-Wash., attempted to strike this harmful provision during the Appropriations Committee markup yesterday, his amendment failed by a vote of 23-26 (notably, three Republicans – Reps. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, and Frank Wolf of Virginia – crossed party lines to support endangered species).

Next stop: a vote by the full House.

In defending the extinction rider, Republicans claim that they're just trying to modify the Endangered Species Act to make it more effective and more manageable for the Fish and Wildlife Service to implement. Then why does the provision prevent any new species from being protected and prohibit the Fish and Wildlife Service from doing its job?

Call me crazy, but that sounds like an attempt to make the Act as ineffective as possible!

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