



Diamondback terrapin © Mac Stone

Help protect my last great place

Last Great Places Society

Members of the Last Great Places Society help protect nature's abundant variety through their generous annual gifts of \$10,000 or more. Make your conservation mark.

Enjoy exclusive benefits such as:

- Unique opportunities to see first-hand the lasting conservation work your financial support has made possible
- Participation in The Nature Conservancy's online Advisory Council, your chance to share valuable feedback on your benefits and Conservancy communications
- A dedicated Conservancy representative responsible for making your relationship with The Nature Conservancy even more meaningful
- And more benefits could be found at Nature.org/lgps

Join Today

For more information: Please contact Maria Fisher (703) 841-8771 or mfisher@tnc.org
Nature.org/lastgreatplaces OR Nature.org/lgps



INSIDE: CONSERVATION NEWS, SCIENCE AND INSPIRATION

worldview



Facing Change

FOR CENTURIES, UNCHECKED COMMERCIAL HUNTING decimated whale numbers worldwide. Today, some populations of humpback, blue and other large whales are on the rise—but new threats could jeopardize their tenuous recovery.

“Many whale populations do appear to be increasing—but so are human-caused threats like accidental entanglements with commercial fishing gear,” says Jenn Humberstone, fisheries project director for

© TONY WU/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

HEAD ON: See more of TNC's work to keep humpback whales like this one safe at nature.org/SafeWhalesCA.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The Nature Conservancy in California. This global problem has intensified along the California coast, with a peak of 50 confirmed entanglements in 2015—five times the average—likely driven by climate change. Unusually warm waters create unfavorable conditions for krill, prompting humpback whales (below), for example, to shift from feeding offshore on krill to seeking anchovies closer to shore, where vertical lines of fishing gear can snag passing whales.

In response, TNC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration held in-person entanglement response trainings and created an online training program on how to report whales in distress. The Conservancy also worked with Dungeness crab fishers and scientists to develop best practices for configuring fishing gear and created a first-of-its-kind early warning system to assess entanglement risk during the fishing season.

The jeopardy for whales extends beyond the shores of the Pacific. In the northern Gulf of Mexico, sperm whales



migrating from feeding grounds near coastal Louisiana to breeding grounds off the coast of southern Texas must navigate many hazards, including shipping lanes, oil rigs and pollution, says TNC's Jorge Brenner, associate director for marine science in Texas.

Using movement data recorded by satellites and findings from more than 100 collaborating researchers, TNC's Brenner mapped 20 of the Gulf's hundreds of migration corridors, dubbed "blueways." Identifying blueways can help ocean industries keep development away from the most heavily trafficked whale roads, he says. —JENNIFER WINGER

BY THE NUMBERS

60

Acres of green roof in New York City as of 2016, according to a report released by TNC. That acreage—the sum of about 730 green roofs—amounts to less than 1% of the city's rooftop space, the report says. New York City has about 40,000 acres of rooftops, some of which are viable for green roof installments that can absorb rainwater and reduce air pollution and urban heat island effects.

20,161

Acres in the Florida Panhandle that TNC purchased and donated to the state in December as part of a deal to protect the land surrounding Lake Wimico. Paid for by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funds that came out of financial penalties resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010, the area provides habitat for vulnerable species like the Florida black bear. The property's wetlands also help safeguard water heading into Apalachicola Bay.

3,400

Feet of river frontage along the Straight River, in Minnesota, on a piece of land the state's Department of Natural Resources bought in February. Purchased with financial help from TNC, the 79-acre parcel will be open to anglers, who favor the area for its trout fishing and good aquatic habitat. The land is adjacent to public lands, creating a nearly 2-mile protected corridor along the Straight River.



FROM LEFT: © TONY WU/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY; STEVEN GNAM

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES: Over the past 20 years, TNC has purchased more than 500,000 acres from Plum Creek Timber—including these forests northeast of Missoula, Montana—but much of it came in small "checkerboard" parcels. Many of these properties now have been joined with neighboring public lands so that forests can be effectively managed and public access permanently secured for generations to come.

Healing a Checkered Past

IN THE 1800S, PORTIONS OF THE towering forests of western Montana—along with a large share of the western United States—were divvied up into roughly square-mile sections granted to railroad companies or sold to homesteaders, each separated by sections that remained under federal ownership. The result was a "checkerboard" pattern of public and private lands, which The Nature Conservancy has spent decades trying to unify. In 2019, TNC sold two properties to the Bureau of Land Management and Lolo National Forest, adding 23,700 acres to existing public lands, all of which had been commercially owned timberland. "This presents an opportunity for the land to be managed as a whole," says Chris Bryant, who directs land protection for TNC in western Montana. The recent deals help reconnect the landscape and put the area on a firm conservation trajectory. "The land no longer is under the threat of subdivision and development," says Bryant. "In other words, the forest will remain forest."

—CATHERINE ZUCKERMAN