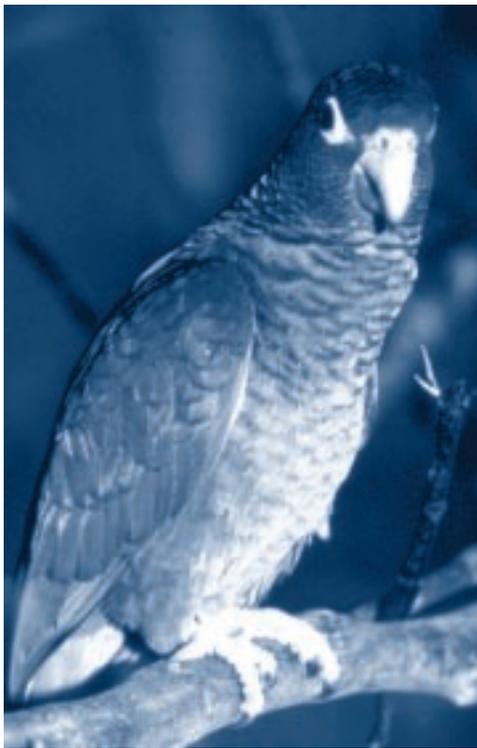


# Endangered Species of Puerto Rico and The U.S. Virgin Islands



José Colón

Puerto Rican parrot

## What is an endangered species?

A species is considered endangered when its population can no longer maintain itself unless measures are taken to diminish the pressures facing that species. The extinction of a species can be caused by natural processes such as hurricanes, volcanoes, fires, floods, disease or competition with other species. This natural process normally occurs over a long period of time, therefore, it is balanced by the evolution of new species. Human beings and their actions have accelerated the extinction process. These actions include habitat destruction or destruction of the organisms themselves, over-exploitation for commercial purposes or collection of species, use of insecticides and the introduction of exotic species or pests.

## Why protect endangered species?

These animals or plants have ecological, educational, historical, cultural, scientific and esthetic value for the people of Puerto Rico and the world as a whole. They are part of our natural heritage.

## How do we protect endangered species?

Among the laws and regulations that protect these species is the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Act:

- Establishes the process by which species are designated as threatened or endangered.

- Identifies the threats that these species face today; such as, habitat destruction which is the principal threat in Puerto Rico and throughout the world.
- Establishes the consulting process in order to insure that agencies, their activities and projects do not negatively impact species listed as threatened or endangered species.
- Identifies and designates critical habitats for some species. These are places where all the necessary requirements for the species survival are present such as water, food, shelter, reproduction areas and sufficient space for the natural expansion of the population.
- Establishes cooperative programs with local agencies such as the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. These agencies receive funding from the Federal government to be used for habitat protection, scientific research investigations, and other recovery activities.
- Establishes programs in order to recover plant and animal populations. Such programs include captive breeding (Puerto Rican parrot and plain pigeon), land acquisition (plant and habitat protection), education and special wildlife and habitat management (Shiny cowbird trapping - this bird is a nest parasite of the endangered Yellow-shouldered blackbird.)
- Prohibits the killing, possession, importation, exportation, and the buying and selling of any animal parts or any product made from an endangered species (e.g., eggs, meat, feathers, jewelry made from turtle shell or elephant ivory.)

## What are the penalties for violating the law?

The penalties can be strong. To kill, harm, harass, trap, buy or sell an endangered species, its parts, or any products derived from it can carry a maximum fine up to \$100,000.00 and/or one year in prison.

## What can you do?

Learn everything you can about protected species and the laws in Puerto Rico, and share this knowledge with other people. Visit and enjoy public forests or refuges, and get to know the protected areas and species found in Puerto Rico. Participate as an active member of a conservation group in Puerto Rico. Never eat eggs or meat, or buy any product derived from a threatened or endangered species. Report any violations of the law to a special agent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 787/749 4338 or a Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources ranger at 787/724 8774.

For more information, please contact:  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
P.O. Box 491  
Boqueron, Puerto Rico 00622  
Phone: 787/851 7297

