# An Ethical Dilemma?

The Endangered Species Act has sparked a lirestorm of protest among some groups. Others, however, have embraced it as a way to protect what may disappear from Idaho. In an effort to get a cross-section of ideas on the topic. FOCUS asked tive Idaho leaders this question. To what extent do people have an obligation to save a species from extinction?



### By Jeanne Givens

Manifest Destiny and the Endangered Species Act are on a collision course that is about to explode in the Northwest.

The Pacific Northwest, the site of wolf reintroduction, spotted owls and salmon recovery battles, was and is still one of the last great frontiers. Two streams of philosophy could not be more divergent than the Native American and the resource user, logger, rancher and herder. One sees animals as an economic nuisance.

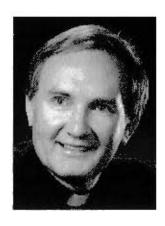
The Native American philosophy is simple: Our brothers and sisters live within the animal world.

The salmon is a good example as it plays out its life story in an easy-to-understand format. The salmon intuitively seeks the occan and returns upriver to spawn and die. Battered and bruised, streaked in red from its long journey, it generously offers itself for food as fishermen easily catch it. To many Northwest Indian tribes, salmon is life. A world without salmon is unimaginable. There is no place in the Indian mind to think of life without salmon.

Manifest Destiny, with its drive to expand territory, left in its wake a way of thinking that isn't healthy for the natural world — perhaps good for the pocketbook but shallow and without vision for future generations.

The present day policy makers will go on their way without regard for fish, and animals; after all, they don't vote. And something sadly will be diminished from our world that was so graciously given to us to protect.  $\square$ 

Native American Jeanne Givens is a former legislator from Coeur d' Alene.



### By Most Rev. Tod D. Brown

All species are God's creatures. We are not always aware of the importance of a particular species. While there has been natural destruction of countless species, over time, the question arises: Do we have a right to outguess nature by deliberate acts of human neglect which would cause the termination of a species?

I would rather not interfere with God's plan for life as it is found in nature. Q

The Most Rev. Tod D. Brown is the Roman Catholic bishop of Idaho, Diocese of Boise



## By Mike Tracy

Nature has been knocking animals into extinction for millions of years. In fact, scientists calculate that 99 percent of all species that existed on this planet went extinct before humans even arrived, which gives rise to two rules of species survivability:

First: Species will go extinct because nature has determined it to be so.

Second: Humans have little ability to change rule number one.

Where humans can help a species along, they should do so. But at what cost?

The current Endangered Species Act (ESA) says cost is not a factor and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has taken that approach with the spotted owl and the snails in Idaho. But the general public disagrees with that argument.

That's why the ESA will probably be changed during the 104th Congress. People, their culture, their livelihoods, and their social structure need to be calculated into the equation of saving any species. Saving a salmon or a snail doesn't mean much to a family trying to put food on the table and clothes on their children.

This lack of common sense in the ESA is why people are rejecting the approach of the federal agencies trying to push the act down their throats. And preservation groups have used the spotted owl and salmon to stop nearly every kind of natural resource activity in Idaho and the other western states.

If the ESA had been used responsibly by the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service, then the act would probably see little change. But the ESA has been abused by the agencies, preservation groups and the courts, so it must be changed to include humans in the cost equation.  $\square$ 

Mike Tracy is the public affairs director for the Idaho Farm Bureau.



# By Craig Gehrke

The continuing loss of plant and animal species in the world should trigger alarm bells in the minds of responsible citizens. The dying off of animal and plant species is telling us something: Ecological systems have been so contaminated, degraded, or disrupted that they no longer support their native wildlife and may not long support us, either. The faster humans extinguish other life forms, the more we imperil ourselves.

Every day humans directly benefit from the earth's biodiversity which the Endangered Species Act is designed to help preserve. More than half of all medicines today can be traced to wild organisms. Some examples:

- The bark of the Pacific yew tree, found primarily in the old-growth forests of the Northwest, has been called the most promising drug in 15 years in treating ovarian and breast cancer.
- The rosy periwinkle, a tropical plant, is a critical component in the treatment of childhood leukemia and Hodgkin's disease.
- Doctors treated President Bush's heart ailment with digoxin, a drug derived from a European wildflower.
- Doctors stabilized President Reagan after he was shot with a drug derived from an Amazonian pit viper.

Only humans have the arrogance to deem another living thing useless and condemn it to extinction. If, as Gandhi wrote, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated," then there can be few greater measures of our moral progress than the strength of our commitment to prevent the extinction of fellow creatures.

Craig Gehrke is regional director of The Wilderness Society.



#### By Rep. Helen Chenoweth

The Endangered Species Act — as it is currently written — is curtailing a lot of bard-working people in Idaho from making a living.

As an Idaho resident, I have an appreciation for the natural resources, wildlife and the beauty of Idaho, and I have a stake in protecting everything that's here. However, in the future we should look more into weighing the cost to the average citizen and looking for ways people and wildlife can survive together.

As a member of the task force that will be reworking the Endangered Species Act, I will be closely scrutinizing all aspects of it and how it will be affecting people of Idaho. I am determined to ensure that no matter what happens with the Endangered Species Act and the protection of salmon and other endangered species, that it will be Idaho that makes the decisions and not the federal bureaucracy. I am adamantly opposed to the federal government deciding what's best for Idaho water, Idaho land and Idaho people.

Helen Chenoweth is a Republican who represents Idaho's First Congressional District.