# [***RECAPPING THE YEAR OF COEXISTENCE***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5XVP-84Y1-JCBF-S04K-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

The following information was ***released by Defenders of Wildlife***:

2019 was a whirlwind year! While we celebrated the Year of Coexistence and shared more about all the imperiled species we are working to protect, we also kept working across the country to implement coexistence tools and strategies. Our success means that more wildlife is surviving and recovering while people are growing more comfortable with sharing the landscape with their wild neighbors.

Beaver

In 2019, Defenders of Wildlife and our partners installed over 10 beaver coexistence projects in Montana and Colorado. These projects - fences to keep beaver from taking down favored trees and flow devices to keep beaver ponds at levels that avoid flooding - were installed on both public and private lands. By resolving the main conflicts and encouraging people to learn to live with beaver, the landscape will benefit from all the amazing things that beaver can do, such as increasing water quantity and quality and creating wetland and riparian habitats for lots of other at-risk critters. We will expand this work in 2020 with more projects and more partners.

Bison

In 2019, Defenders and our partners helped three Montana landowners install bison coexistence projects just north and west of Yellowstone National Park where wild bison roam into adjacent communities and sometimes come into conflict with landowners. This brings our total number of bison coexistence projects to 48. These simple fences keep bison from destroying gardens, landscaping, or other items of value to landowners, and thereby increases support and acceptance for the presence of these iconic wild animals.

Coexistence Science

This year, Defenders advanced the science of human-wildlife coexistence through publishing three cutting-edge research articles. Our research in Biological Conservation advanced thinking on animal behavior and predator-prey 'landscapes of fear' to create a new framework for using fear as a management tool to protect imperiled predators and livestock. A soon-to-be-released article in Conservation Biology proposes an ecological framework for increasing the effectiveness of management interventions for carnivore-livestock interactions. And a third forthcoming article (currently in peer-review revision) explores a new methodology for comparing managers' perceptions to realities of conflict hotspots. This research offers new approaches to help managers and conservation practitioners transform human-wildlife conflict into coexistence, while protecting imperiled predators like wolves and ranchers' livelihoods.

Coexistence Summit

In 2019, Defenders brought together nearly 100 leading scientists, landowners, conservation organizations and governmental representatives for the first Human-Wildlife Coexistence Summit.The event highlighted the value of coming together in such a forum to openly discuss our collective coexistence efforts and key opportunities and needs for reducing human-wildlife conflicts.Topics of discussion ranged from community engagement and funding for coexistence to partnerships and evaluation. The event also provided a great platform for networking and exploring areas of potential future collaboration to advance coexistence for people and wildlife. Defenders is looking forward to engaging even more stakeholders through similar events.

Federal Funding for Coexistence

This year, Defenders worked in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council to secure critical new funding for USDA Wildlife Services in the FY2020 appropriations package. The Agriculture appropriations bill included $1.38 million for Wildlife Services to hire new personnel dedicated exclusively to promoting and implementing nonlethal predator deterrence techniques in up to 12 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming). This new funding is a tremendous victory for our coexistence efforts and will greatly benefit wildlife and rural communities in states across the country.

Florida Panthers

FWC

In 2019, Defenders reached thousands of people through our habitat conservation, transportation planning and coexistence work. In panther territory south of the Caloosahatchee river, we presented at festivals and other outreach events that drew over 12,000 people. We also spoke at homeowners' associations and schools to reach people of all ages and involve them in sharing the ever-changing landscape with panthers. We helped fund several predator-resistant livestock protection enclosures in southwest Florida and are working with families south and north of the Caloosahatchee River (where panther reproduction is new) to secure their livestock and pets. Our educational materials, both print and electronic, also reach members across the country.

Gray Wolves in the Golden State

This year, Defenders worked with our partners at USDA Wildlife Services and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to bring nonlethal wolf-livestock conflict reduction tools to ranchers in northern California. We were on-hand for several turbofladry installations throughout the year and provided several miles of this specialized fencing and associated equipment to lend to livestock producers to use. Our California program staff presented "The Return of Gray Wolves to California" to enraptured audiences around the state, including as part of the Humboldt State University's Sustainable Futures Speaker Series. Defenders also advocated for continued federal protections for gray wolves outside of the Northern Rocky Mountains, successfully persuading the California Fish and Game Commission to send a letter in opposition to the federal delisting proposal, which would hamper wolves' ability to recover here in California.

Gray Wolves in the Rocky Mountains

Eilish Palmer

In 2019, Defenders cost-shared on four large-landscape range rider projects in Montana. These projects minimize livestock loss to wolves and grizzly bears, which helps keep these predators out of harm's way from people. We also partnered with NRDC and Wildlife Services to fund a first-ever non-lethal technician for Wildlife Services in Montana. Our field staff worked with this new technician on multiple coexistence projects across Montana, including the installation of four fladry projects to prevent conflicts between wolves and livestock. In Colorado, we hosted five "Ranching with Predators" workshops, reaching more than 100 people, to provide coexistence information to ranchers in this state prior to the expected arrival of wolves in the future.

Grizzly Bears in the Northern Rocky Mountains

In 2019, Defenders assisted an additional 40 landowners in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho with technical and financial help to secure attractants such as beehives, chicken coops, and orchards from grizzlies with bear-resistant electric fences. This brings our total number of electric fence projects in the Northern Rockies to more than 400. In 2019 we also contacted more than 100 landowners directly about conflict reduction and electric fencing assistance, shared information at six outreach events, assisted with the cost of installing multiple bear-resistant garbage containers in high conflict areas, and provided 50 cans of bear spray for distribution by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to hunters and others who travel in high-density grizzly bear habitat.

James Yule

Grizzly Bears in the Northwest

Defenders continued training community groups in the Selkirk mountains in Washington state about bear awareness, hosting three trainings in March and three in August. We also hosted our first bear awareness training in the North Cascades with the Sauk-Suiattle ***Tribe***, the only ***tribe*** with reservation lands inside of the North Cascades ecosystem. At these trainings, people learn how to Play Smart in bear country and how to use bear spray. At the end of each training, we provided a free can of bear spray to all our participants, passing out 210 cans of bear spray this year alone to people that live in the heart of Washington's grizzly country.

Defenders has also been expanding our grizzly coexistence work in the North Cascades. In May, we hosted our inaugural Bear Awareness Workshop for agency staff, elected officials, and businesses that work in and around the North Cascades to highlight solutions for reducing human-bear conflict. Following that workshop, Defenders partnered with Seattle City Light to provide bear-resistant trash cans to each of their employees that live in Diablo and Newhalem, two communities just outside of North Cascades National Park. We also purchased four bear resistant trashcan containers for the US Forest Service, and we are continuing to build on our success and are actively working with other local communities on ways to secure their trash and other attractants in order to reduce human-bear conflicts.

Mexican Gray Wolves

Lilah Hubbard

In 2019, Defenders supported 14 range rider projects to monitor livestock and Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest U.S. to minimize negative interactions. We co-sponsored a Tribal Youth Wolf Conservation Program with the White Mountain Apache ***Tribe***, which hired six young tribal members to work with the wolf project field team. We assisted the ***tribe***'s Range Department with securing funding for its new conflict management specialist. We co-sponsored nine graduate student interns to assist the Mexican wolf interagency field team with monitoring and conflict avoidance work, expanding the internship to a year-round program. We also sponsored the participation of two Mexican biologists on the field team to gain hands-on experience for recovery efforts in Mexico. Finally, Defenders organized two workshops on minimizing conflicts between wolves and livestock, focused on predator and ungulate ecology, range riders, herding and livestock management strategies. Approximately 60 ranchers and resource managers attended the two workshops.

Orcas

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2019 was the second year of our new Orcas Love Raingardens program. Based in Tacoma, the program connects students and their families to raingardens, which help to capture and filter polluted stormwater runoff before it gets into local waterways and impacts wildlife. This last year, we worked with 380 student volunteers at six different schools to plant 1000 plants, pull weeds, and spread mulch. Through this hands-on learning, students have a better understanding of how we can retrofit our cities to act more like forests, allowing our urban communities to coexist with our wild neighbors.

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