

Breeding Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act not only established policies to prevent harm to endangered species, it also directed government agencies to take steps to recover viable populations. One strategy for this second goal includes captive breeding of endangered species. Animals such as the California condor have been taken from the wild, often forever, and brought into captivity for breeding purposes. In effect, the individual animal is sacrificed for the good of the species. Do we have a responsibility to ensure the survival of a species? Is this equally true for all species? Is it as true for mosquitos and bacteria as it is for condors and whales? Is biological diversity itself valuable?

Many environmental objections to human activities focus on the effects of those activities on animals. Pollution has led to the near extinction of numerous fish species, for example. If it were possible to breed animals to be less susceptible to the effects

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of pollution, would this be a reasonable alternative to reducing pollution? Would genetic engineering be a helpful tool for environmentalists?