10 Iconic Game Species At Risk From Climate Change

Few American traditions have survived the test of time like hunting and fishing. Whether setting a hook on a king salmon, watching a sage grouse display, or seeing a trophy moose amble by, the outdoor experience enjoyed today is the same enjoyed by generations of sportsmen and women. Unfortunately, climate change is unraveling the fiber of these traditions, putting many of America's iconic game species - as well as the $120 billion annual hunting, fishing and wildlife-related recreation industry - at risk.

To protect this American legacy for future generations, Congress must enact strong climate and clean energy legislation this year. This legislation must reduce carbon pollution and dedicate funding to safeguard fish, wildlife and natural resources, creating thousands of jobs in rural America and restoring wildlife habitats. Without swift action, the next generation of hunters and anglers will not have the same opportunities to hunt and fish these 10 iconic game species that current and previous generations have enjoyed.

USFWS

Brook Trout

The cold water streams of the Appalachian Mountains harbor the highly sought after brook trout. Because brook trout are unable to tolerate waters above about 72°F, climate change is projected to dramatically reduce their habitat, as well as that of other trout species across much of North America.

George Gentry

Pintail

One of the most popular duck for hunters, the pintail is likely to dramatically decline with climate change. Prairie potholes of the upper Midwest provide abundant breeding habitat for pintails and other waterfowl, including mallards, gadwall, blue-winged teal, shovelers, canvasbacks and redheads. Higher temperatures increase evaporation and could shrink prairie potholes to a fraction of their current size and abundance.

Cobist

Moose

Large-bodied and densely furred, moose become stressed by summer temperatures above 57°F and winter temperatures above 23°F. As Minnesota temperatures sky-rocketed in recent decades, the state's northwest moose population plummeted from some 4,000 animals to about 100 today. Climate change will be a challenge for other moose populations in the lower 48 states.

Mipcallero

King Salmon

Climate change puts king salmon and other salmon of the Pacific Northwest under increased stress due not only to warmer water temperatures, but also increased winter flooding and decreased summer and fall stream flows. The greater extremes in flooding and drought reduce the quantity and quality of available habitat.

Flickr: NDomer73

Sage Grouse

The largest grouse species in North America, the sage grouse must live in sagebrush habitats in order to find enough food and cover to survive. Habitat loss and degradation have already greatly reduced sage grouse range and abundance, and climate change threatens to change much of its remaining habitat by reducing the abundance and distribution of sagebrush.

Flickr: Paco Lyptic

Yellow Perch

Climate change has already affected the long tradition of winter ice fishing for yellow perch and other species. The mild 2006-2007 winter in the northern states kept anxious anglers on the shores waiting for safe ice. Fishing tournaments were cancelled and the sale of fishing licenses dropped.

Flickr: NDomer73

Bobwhite Quail

A popular game bird, hunters and game managers have been concerned with the bobwhite's decades long decline. Many factors have contributed to the decline and the causes continue to be investigated. The susceptibility of bobwhite to high summer temperatures suggests that climate change may be one of these factors, and a likely concern as the climate warms further.

G. Richard Mode

Bonefish

Sea level rise brought on by climate change is projected to forever change the fragile mangroves, seagrass beds, tidal flats and bays that provide bonefish habitat. Climate change will exacerbate loss and degradation of coastal wetlands, which help cleanse water and produce important prey species for bonefish.

Flickr: mikebaird

Brant

Until recently, most of the brant (a species of goose) breeding in Alaska spent the winter in Mexico. But due to climate change, many brant simply do not bother with the long trip, and stay in Alaska year-round. Scientists worry that sudden, severe cold snaps with more extensive shoreline ice could put these birds at significant risks they would not face when wintering further south.

Nic Callero

Cutthroat Trout

Native to much of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin, cutthroat trout are already threatened by habitat degradation and non-native fish species. Increased water temperatures threaten to further reduce habitat for this cold water species. The impact is being felt by anglers, as high water temperatures in 2007 led to unprecedented fishing restrictions in Yellowstone National Park.

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