

Spotlight on the Endangered Species coalition

Brock Evans, President, Discusses the State of the Conservation Movement

IN THE SPOTLIGHT for this issue of *Currents* is Brock Evans, President of the Endangered Species Coalition (ESC). Founded in 1982, ESC is a national network of hundreds of conservation, scientific, outdoor recreation, business and community organizations working to protect the nation's threatened wildlife and last remaining wild places. Much of the coalition's efforts are directed toward safeguarding the Endangered Species Act (ESA).







This is the fifth in a series of interviews with representatives of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO) intended to broaden our understanding of the NGO community and to enhance Navy-NGO environmental cooperation and partnerships.

This interview was conducted on 24 February 2010 in the Washington, D.C. offices of the Defenders of Wildlife (one of ESC's member organizations) by Tracey Moriarty, Director of Environmental Outreach for the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Division, and Bruce McCaffrey, Managing Editor, *Currents*.

Currents: Let's start with a discussion of your background.

Brock Evans: I am now President of the ESC, which I joined in 1997 as its Executive Director. Prior to assuming leadership of the ESC, I served as Vice

President for National Issues for the National Audubon Society for 15 years. Earlier, I had served for eight years as Director (head lobbyist) of the Sierra Club's Washington, D.C. office, and for six more as the Club's Northwest Representative, responsible for its interests from the North Pole to California. I have also done scholarly work at the Environmental Law Institute in Washington, as a Fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics and I've taught in Israel at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.

Currents: Tell us about your service in the United States Marine Corps.

Evans: It was the depths of the Cold War—1959. I graduated from college and came home to find my draft notice waiting for me. That was something every American male faced in those days. Your choices were to enlist, seek a

deferment or get drafted. So I enlisted. I figured if I was gonna be a soldier I might as well be the best soldier I could be so I joined the Marines.

I went through boot camp at Parris Island, did advanced infantry training at Camp Lejeune, then went into the Reserves in Michigan. By this time I was going to law school at the University of Michigan and was finding it almost impossible to make the weekend meetings, so in 1961 I transferred to the local Army Reserve. But in my mind, I'll always be a Marine.

I learned a lot from my service. Nothing could ever be harder, and I carried this attitude with me into my environmental career.

Currents: How so?

Evans: In the Marines—in training—they make you do things that you know you can't possibly do. But your peers are following you around, making sure you do it. If you're going to lead the assault infantry, you can't think you can't do it.

Well, the whole story of the conservation movement is small bands of people fighting to save the places they love. When I was with the Sierra Club, what I saw over and over again was that small bands of people who had the courage to stand up and fight for what they love can win. It's surprising how often we win. The history of the conservation movement is in turning hopelessly lost causes into stunning victories.

Pull out a map some time and look at all the green places—the wilderness areas and national parks. Almost each one of those places was put there by small bands of people who so loved their land that they were willing to fight for it however long it took.

Currents: What made you interested in environmentalism in the first place?

Evans: I moved to Seattle to be a mountain climber. I loved the wilderness there with its magnificent forests eight feet thick and 200 feet high—some of them older than Charlemagne. And one year, one trail after another was destroyed—trails that I had hiked one summer, dreamed about all winter and couldn't wait to go back to the following summer. That's when I got angry. I was determined to do something about it, but it all seemed hopeless. It was the government doing all of these things. The timber industry was running the politics in the northwest states. I became passionate about saving my beloved Northwest.

I was a lawyer at the time and that's when I joined the Sierra Club. That was the time that the environmental movement—they called it the conservation movement then—was blossoming across the entire country. And I started getting involved in lots of causes.

I made a vow to myself one night when I came across one timber sale too many—"I don't know if we're going to win or lose, but it won't be because I didn't give it everything I had." We're not just destroying trees that are eight feet thick and 200 feet high, but we're destroying whole habitats and ecosystems. We're destroying water filtration and clean air too. Someone has to stand up and do something.

Currents: On our way over here, we were talking about an article that appeared recently in the New York Times (NYT) regarding the fact that a lot of endangered species are migrating onto military bases because they're some of the last areas of unde-

veloped land available to them. (See "Pentagon Making Room for Wildlife at Military Bases" on the NYT's web site at <http://www.nytimes.com>.) Do you want to talk to us about some of your own initiatives—ESC's "Mending the Net" campaign that seeks to repair the damage done to the ESA by the Bush administration?

Evans: Sure. But first I should mention that the Department of Defense (DoD) is entrusted with the management of some of the most pristine and incredible wild lands. Because of DoD's excellent stewardship of these lands, they are also some of the most pristine in terms of biological resources. For example, I know over 50 endangered species call Marine Corps installations home. I've had the pleasure of visiting many of these bases and talking with the dedicated scientists and officials in charge of environmental protection. These professionals have shown me how they have balanced land conservation with their efforts to make the base suitable for military training.

And they have had amazing success at protecting our nation's most endangered species. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA alone supports 17

listed species. On the east coast, Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA supports the highest number of small whorled pogonia colonies in Virginia and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC supports one of the few increasing populations of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in coastal North Carolina.

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However, development around these bases both hampers military readiness and threatens the natural habitat. The military and conservationists have a common mission to protect these critical buffer areas of open space around bases, both to keep the bases viable training centers and to protect vulnerable wildlife. We have been happy to form a partnership with DoD to protect these wild areas and keep America strong and vital.

Celebrate Endangered Species Day on 21 May 2010

ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY is an opportunity for people young and old to learn about the importance of protecting endangered species and everyday actions that people can take to help protect our nation's disappearing wildlife and last remaining open space. Protecting America's wildlife and plants today is a legacy we leave to our children and grandchildren, so that all Americans can experience the rich variety of native species that help to define our nation.

For more information, visit www.EndangeredSpeciesDay.org.

The Basics About Section 7 Consultations

SECTION 7 OF the ESA directs all federal agencies to use their existing authorities to conserve threatened and endangered species and to consult with the USFWS to ensure their actions do not jeopardize listed species or their habitats.

A crucial part of the endangered species program, Section 7 consultations are used to address threats that may result from federal agency programs and activities, and help identify ways to prevent such threats and/or to implement recovery.

If a Federal agency determines that a project is likely to adversely affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, the agency initiates formal consultation by providing information with regard to the nature of the anticipated effects.

The ESA requires that consultation be completed within 90 days, and the regulations allow an additional 45 days for the USFWS to prepare a biological opinion, which consists of an analysis of whether or not the proposed action is likely to jeopardize the species in question or its habitat. If a jeopardy or adverse modification determination is made, the biological opinion must identify any reasonable and prudent alternatives that could allow the project to move forward.



Now to answer your question, under our “Mending the Net” campaign, ESC is working with the Obama administration to undo some of the damage done to the ESA by the previous administration. And we’ve already had some successes under Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

One of the things that the Bush administration did was to try to remove the Section 7 consultation provision.

In order to build a dam or a highway, developers under Section 7 of the ESA have to consult with biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the potential impact of their project on threatened and endangered species. Far too often these construction projects have compromised the habitats that endangered species rely upon for survival. The Bush administration

pushed through a change in the wording of the ESA to require “self-consultations,” which means that the developer needs only to ask himself whether or not their proposed construction project will have an adverse impact on the surrounding ecosystem. When the new administration came in, we knew we had a chance to reverse this, and after a lot of hard work, we succeeded.

I should also say that it is very rare that a project is cancelled because of the consultation process. Between 1998 and 2001, the USFWS conducted more than 219,000 consultations and only required changes to 367 of them to reduce impacts on endangered species. Once small changes are made to protect the environment, most projects are allowed to move forward.

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This was very important because one of the best defenses we have to protect these species once they’re listed is through a Section 7 consultation. In our experience, over 90 percent of the time, once you consult, you can still build your project with some adjustments to your original plan.

Currents: So no one should be afraid of these consultations because they usually result in a solution that works for everybody?

Evans: The ultimate solution often works better than the original proposal.

The ESA is a uniquely American idea. It reflects our country's "can-do" spirit. We believe that we can have our national parks, our wilderness areas and still do the development we want to do. I testified in front of the Canadian Parliament a number of years ago because they were considering the Species at Risk Act. I said that this type of legislation is a good thing. The ESA has established a somewhat adversarial system among the developers and the conservationists in the United States, but it works. And most of the time, it gets at the truth.

Currents: The ESC is also working to reverse the Bush administration's efforts to establish a species "current range" as the baseline for the animal's protected habitat. Right?

Evans: Right. Take the Northern Spotted Owl for example. We all know that its current range is now limited to approximately six million acres of magnificent, big old growth forest. Some of that forest is being cut down—albeit at a much slower rate. But the Northern Spotted Owl's range used to be nearly 27 million acres. Some of those trees will grow back in 50 years or so. But there has to be enough space for the Northern Spotted Owl to go in the event of fire or impacts from climate change—somewhere between six and 27 million acres.

We celebrated victories this year on behalf other species including the Canada Lynx, Marbled Murrelet and Bull Trout. We advocated for these species in meetings that we arranged with various Congress-

sional offices, the Department of Interior Inspector General's Office and the Government Accountability Office.

The ESA is a uniquely American idea. It reflects our country's "can-do" spirit.

Currents: What is the ESC doing about climate change?

Evans: Unfortunately it's not enough to place an animal on the endangered list—that's a slow process and politically cumbersome. Given the warming of the planet, we have to have alternative places for critters to live. One example is the marmots that live up in the high country in Glacier National Park. The winters are too short now, even at the highest elevation. In order to survive, the marmots are moving north where the winters are longer and the elevations higher. So we need to designate new habitats to preserve these species—an ongoing effort that we're championing.

Global warming is threatening wildlife, fish and plants that are already on the brink of extinction. Melting sea ice,

warming ocean and river waters, shifting lifecycles and migration patterns are impacting endangered species, including polar bears, penguins, coral, salmon and migratory birds. A recently released report from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that 20-30 percent of animal and plant species could be at an increased risk of extinction. ESC is working to protect endangered species from the impacts of global warming.

Currents: What do you think is the biggest challenge to future successful collaborations among the Navy and the environmental NGO community?

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America's Hottest Species: Ten Endangered Wildlife, Fish & Plants Impacted by Climate Change

THIS REPORT FROM ESC demonstrates ways that our changing climate is increasing the risk of extinction for certain species on the brink of disappearing forever.

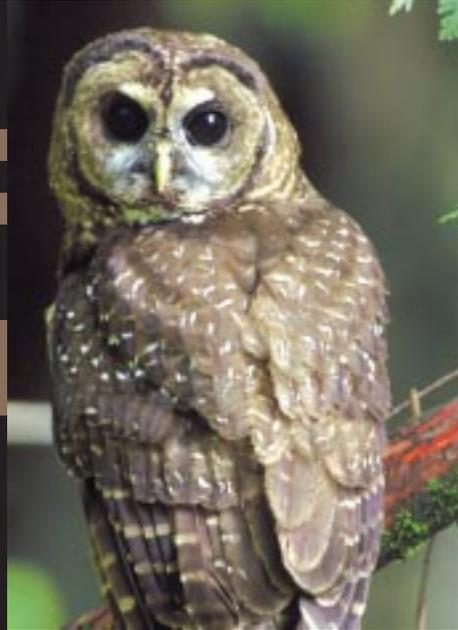
The report focuses on ten species that are listed or being reviewed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The global warming threats to these species include increased disease, diminished reproduction, lost habitat, reduced food supply and other impacts.

Download an electronic copy of this report at www.stopextinction.org/top10.html.



The Basics About the Northern Spotted Owl

Common Name	Northern Spotted Owl
Scientific Name	<i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>
Status	Threatened
Range	South British Columbia, western Washington and Oregon, and northwestern California south to Marin County. Southeastern boundary of range is the Pit River area of Shasta County, California.
Habitat Type	Older forested habitats that provide the structural characteristics required for nesting, roosting and foraging. Multi-layered, multi-species canopy with moderate to high canopy closure.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loss of suitable habitat as a result of timber harvesting and exacerbated by fire, volcanic eruption, disease and wind storms ■ Small and isolated populations vulnerable to extinction, predation and competition ■ Competition with the barred owl (<i>Strix varia</i>) ■ Fire in the relatively dry East Cascades and Klamath provinces of California and Oregon ■ West Nile virus and the sudden oak death tree disease



ESC Protection Successes	On 17 July 2009, the Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will withdraw a controversial logging plan affecting federal forests managed by BLM in Oregon. The Secretary also announced that decisions by the Bush administration to reduce designated critical habitat and establish a recovery plan for the Northern Spotted Owl were also being reversed. A new Northern Spotted Owl recovery plan will now be developed.
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The Basics About the Marbled Murrelet

Common Name	Marbled Murrelet
Scientific Name	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
Status	Threatened
Range	Extends from Bristol Bay, Alaska, south to the Aleutian Archipelago, northeast to Cook Inlet, Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound, south coastally throughout the Alexander Archipelago of Alaska, and through British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, to northern Monterey Bay in central California.
Habitat Type	Old-growth forests, characterized by large trees, multiple canopy layers, and moderate to high canopy closure.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loss of habitat ■ Predation ■ Gill-net fishing operations ■ Oil spills ■ Marine pollution ■ Disease



Gus Van Vliet,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ESC Protection Successes	The Western Oregon Plan Revisions would have tripled old-growth logging on federal forests in Oregon managed by BLM, reducing habitat for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet, as well as impacting threatened wild-salmon stocks. An estimated 680 known Northern Spotted Owl sites and 600 Marbled Murrelet sites would have been eliminated over the course of the plan's implementation.
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Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service web site (www.fws.gov)

The Basics About the Bull Trout

Common Name	Bull Trout
Scientific Name	<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>
Status	Threatened
Range	Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington with a small population in northern Nevada. No longer occur in northern California.
Habitat Type	Spawn in the fall in streams with cold, unpolluted water, clean gravel and cobble substrate, and gentle stream slopes.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sensitive to increased water temperatures, poor water quality, and low flow conditions ■ Timber harvest and livestock grazing which degrade stream habitat ■ Dams and other in-stream structures that block migration routes, alter water temperatures and kill fish as they pass through and over dams or are trapped in irrigation and other diversion structures



ESC Protection Successes In February 2010, USFWS announced a proposed rule to protect 21,000 miles of stream habitat and 500,000 acres of lakes for the threatened Bull Trout. This rule replaces a Bush administration rule that had undermined important, scientifically-recommended habitat protections for Bull Trout.

The Basics About the Canada Lynx

Common Name	Canada Lynx
Scientific Name	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>
Status	Threatened
Range	Portions of northern Maine, northeastern Minnesota, the Northern Rocky Mountains (northwestern Montana and northeastern Idaho), the Northern Cascades (north-central Washington), and the Greater Yellowstone Area (southwestern Montana and northwestern Wyoming).
Habitat Type	Boreal forest landscapes that provide one or more of the following beneficial habitat elements: snowshoe hares for prey, abundant, large, woody debris piles that are used as dens, and winter snow conditions that are generally deep and fluffy for extended periods of time.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shooting, killing, trapping and collecting ■ Harassing individual animals



ESC Protection Successes On 28 February 2008, USFWS issued new critical habitat for the Canada Lynx. The proposal added approximately 40,913 square miles to the 1,841 square miles of critical habitat for the lynx proposed previously for a total of 42,754 square miles.

Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service web site (www.fws.gov)

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Evans: There have been conflicts, not so much today, but in the past. We used to hear, “If our troops can’t train, we’re gonna get killed.” I would compare these conflicts to the type of conflicts we have had with the timber industry. Of course, I know that the timber industry is going to make the most money by cutting down the biggest trees but you don’t have to do that to survive economically. Often, there are other economically viable options that don’t cause the same adverse impact to the species we seek to protect.

Still there are some stereotypes on both sides. I would urge your readers not to think that we’re protecting threatened and endangered species because we’re anti-military or that we don’t appreciate what the Navy is trying to do. The ESC and its member organizations don’t file lawsuits frivolously. We can’t afford to.

Currents: What are the stereotypes held by those of you in the environmental NGO community about the Navy and its environmental program?

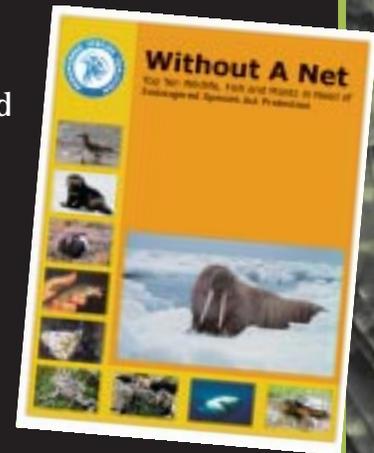
Evans: I’m one of the few people in the NGO community with any military experience whatsoever, which I think is a shame. But, the stereotype on our side is that you’re all about machine guns, atom bombs and blowing up buildings. Things you see on television.

Now, after the Services won the right to develop their own Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) and we realized that you were doing a good job of drafting and

Without A Net: Top Ten Wildlife, Fish and Plants in Need of Endangered Species Act Protection

THIS REPORT INCLUDES the top ten species plus three honorable mentions that are in danger of extinction, but are not protected under the ESA.

Download an electronic copy of this report at www.stopextinction.org/top10/withoutanet.html.



executing those plans, some of the hyperbole on both sides eased a bit.

These DoD exemptions were the only significant weakening of the ESA in the past 30 years. ESC was founded in 1982 as a “trip wire” to follow endangered species issues every day, all the time and to sound the alarm because the Act was always under assault. Most of what we have seen on the INRMPs front has been very good management of various species.

Currents: Do you think most people are aware that the Navy and other services have dedicated environmental programs?

they were doing. Vandenberg Air Force Base [in California] just blew me away. There were these three Titans going off in one little area and the rest of the base was completely wild. There are lots of sensitive plant and animal species living there.

Another time, I was invited on a Secretary of the Navy’s tour of the aircraft carrier USS JOHN KENNEDY. I was one of the few environmental leaders on it, but we got to see what the Navy did for a few days. I got to wander on this great war ship—a city of 6,000 people out there in the ocean. They have some pretty impressive recycling efforts. A little thing like

Anybody who’s an environmentalist loves his land. Anybody who’s in the military and is defending his land, loves his land.

Evans: They are nowadays. The universal opinion is that there are a lot of people [in the military] doing great things. In 1993, when I was Vice President of the National Audubon Society, I took a couple of trips to military bases to see what kinds of things

changing a cup with a plastic rim to a cup with a paper rim makes a difference. When they’re in the Adriatic, they have a ship come out to offload their trash.

I wrote an article about this visit. I don’t know if any of my peers read it,

but some people in the Marine Corps read it. Then-Colonel Lehnert (now a Major General (ret.)) read it and we started a relationship. To quote General Lehnert, “A country worth defending is a country worth preserving.” And that’s why I say, we love the land equally. Anybody who’s an environmentalist loves his land. Anybody who’s in the military and is defending his land, loves his land.

Currents: Do you see a value in setting those tours up again for the next generation of the NGO community?

Evans: Absolutely. It’s one of the best things I could imagine. It was a real eye opener. Another program that was going on for a while was a brown bag lunch program. Anyone in the Services could go to an environmentalist’s office and talk about current issues. The point was to get to know each other. If the environmentalist’s stereotype of the military is “These people are all killers,” I believe the stereotype

on the other side is, “If these guys aren’t commies, they’re probably sympathizers.” It was like that then. But since that time—and I’d like to take a little credit for it—what we’re coming to realize is that this is a really incredible habitat out here and people are just trying to protect it.

One of the best ways to avoid misconceptions and lawsuits is to conduct these tours of military installations. Get to know me and our folks. There is nothing like being able to pick up the phone and say, “Hey, what are you guys doing? I heard about this lawsuit.”

We can’t stop people from filing lawsuits but we can provide moral, legal and political support. We can be political allies as well as scientific allies.

Currents: How do you think that the Navy and the NGOs could be scientific allies?

Evans: Well, let me give you an example. Although I know nothing about the particular science involved here, let’s take the issue of sonar use and its potential impact on marine mammals. If I were starting that project, I’d say, let’s not just talk to our in-house scientists and scientists at various universities. Let’s talk to the one group that is likely to take adverse action—the so-called environmental groups.

We can be political allies as well as scientific allies.

Currents: You may be interested to know that the Navy has a robust marine mammal research program right now. We work with highly respected researchers from scientific institutions, such as Scripps, Woods Hole and Duke University. We have

Navy Shipboard Environmental Protection Highlights

IN THE 1970s, the Navy installed sewage collection and holding tanks to prevent the discharge of raw sewage in coastal waters and in port.

In the 1980s, Navy ships were equipped with Oil/Water Separators and Oil Content Monitors to prevent the discharge of oil at sea.

In the 1990s, the Navy began using Tributyltin-free hull antifouling coatings, far in advance of the international treaty to ban such paints.

The Navy equipped its warships with suites of solid waste equipment (Plastic Waste Processors, Pulpers and Metal/Glass Shredders) to ensure that no plastic is discharged at sea and all other solid waste discharges are made with no environmental impact while at sea.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Navy began:

1. Converting all of its Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) air-conditioning and refrigeration systems to non-CFCs to help protect the ozone layer.
2. Outfitting all warships with pollution prevention equipment to reduce generation and offloads of hazardous waste, saving time and money, and protecting the environment.
3. Reducing allowed hazardous material items onboard its ships by 66 percent, and planning to reduce the number of items by an additional 15 percent to enhance the safety and health of its Sailors.
4. Using only shipboard paints with reduced hazardous air emissions to enhance air quality in port.



some behavioral response studies of marine mammals that are underway at Bahamas and southern California—they're focused now on beaked whales because we think they may be more sensitive to sound. Those results can be shared with the NGO community.

Evans: That's great. It would be great to get the head of Defenders of Wildlife or the Natural Resources Defense Council to walk on the base or go through the laboratory with you. They'll be impressed with what you are trying to do to minimize the impact of your operations on marine mammals. Because these people love whales, seals and dolphins. And if there's any Service that comes into contact with them, it's the Navy.

Currents: What else would you like to talk about? What else do you want our readers to know about your organization?

Evans: What I would like people to feel and believe is that when we environmental organizations do what we do—when we speak and act as we do—it's out of love. I'm one of the few males that will use that word—love—but it really is love. Love of the critters, love of the land and all of it put together.

That's the only way to explain why 99 percent of the environmental movement is made up of volunteers. People will literally dedicate their careers and lives to the protection of the environment.

I'd also like your readers to know that in spite of what they may read about big, wealthy environmental groups—and there are a few big ones—we can't compare with the resources garnered by even the smallest oil company. We always believe that we're the political underdogs. We can never match corporate power and money. But we also feel that the people are with us.

Look at any public opinion poll—85 to 90 percent of the people don't want animals to go extinct. Since I took over the ESC in 1997, there have been 100 specific legislative assaults on the ESA and only one of them succeeded. Why? Because we call upon people stand up for the things they believe in. That's why people don't mess with parks or wilderness areas. If the American people didn't love these things, they wouldn't exist.

We believe that we environmentalists share a deep, common bond with other groups and institutions in this country, especially the military. The military puts themselves on the line to defend our country and they're doing a great job. I give them credit for this, and I'd like to see more understanding of the military's mission throughout the NGO community. This is why things like your magazine are so important—to promote this understanding.

For more perspectives from Brock Evans on a variety of issues, visit his "Endless Pressure" blog at www.endlesspressure.org.

People will say, "You can't do it all, you can't save it all. It's never going to be enough." And I say, "So what are you gonna do, go home?" Our job is to thrust every acre and every species we possibly can into the future.

Currents: Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today, Brock.

Evans: You're welcome. 📍