

Slipping Through Our Hands

Imperiled Wildlife
of the Greater San Juans

By Tony Povilitis
with illustrations by Amy Grogan



This book is a unique guide to endangered and vulnerable wildlife of the San Juan Mountains and surrounding areas of Colorado and New Mexico. It includes:

- ◆ profiles of 110 animal & plant species
- ◆ original drawings & illustrations
- ◆ regional & North American range maps
- ◆ species conservation & legal status
- ◆ information on habitat & threats
- ◆ natural history & historical notes
- ◆ conservation measures for landowners, public agencies, & all citizens
- ◆ observations & vignettes from the author's personal field notes ... & more!

This book makes a great companion to standard animal and plant field guides.

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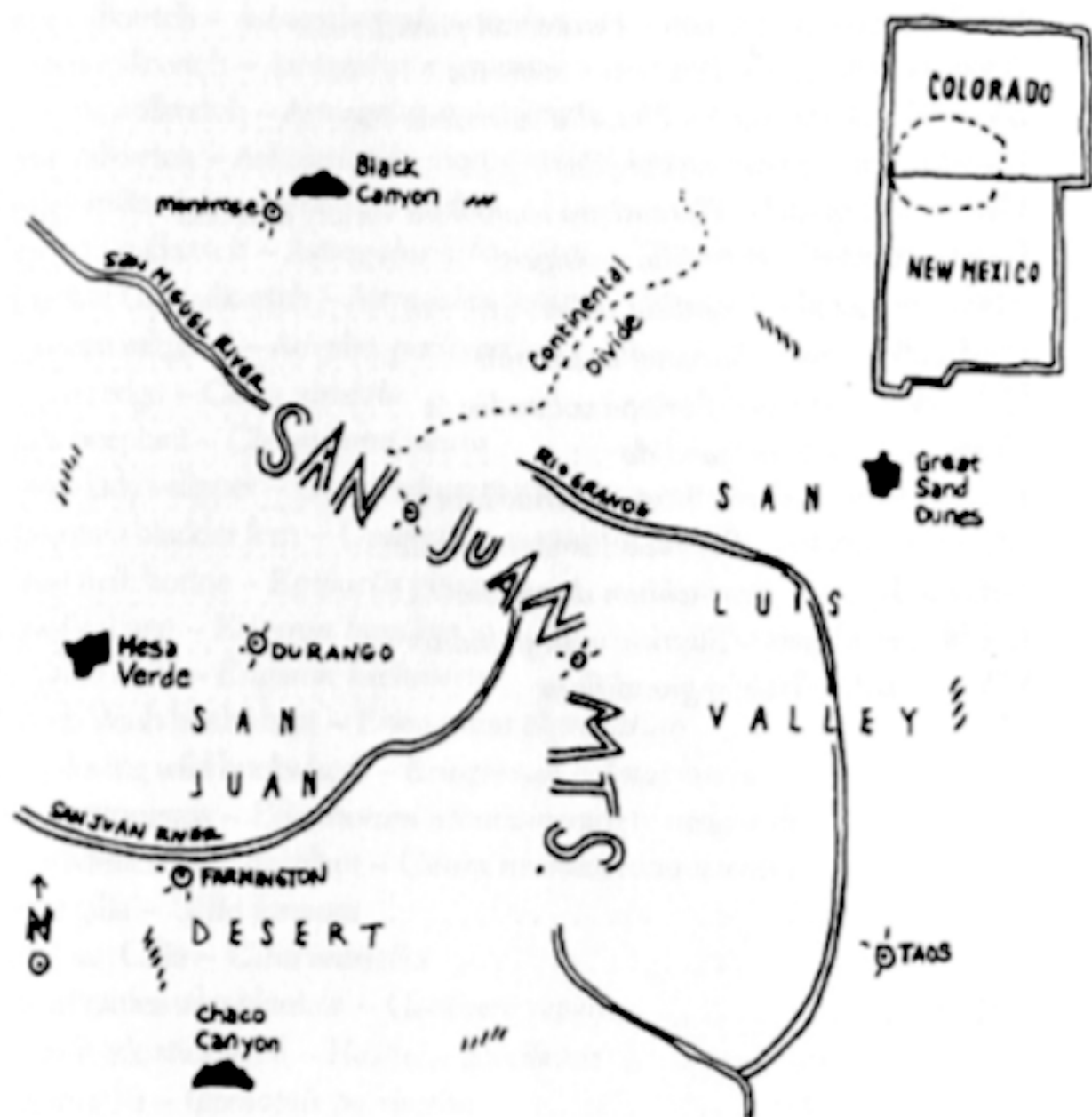
*This book is dedicated to
the people of the Greater San Juans
who will not let wildlife perish.*

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THE SAN JUAN ECOREGION

The San Juan Ecoregion includes the San Juan Mountains and surrounding highlands, valleys, and deserts. It is renowned for its natural beauty and landscape tapestry of small towns, farms, ranches, open country, and wilderness. The future of wildlife in the region depends more than ever on the people who live, work, and play there.



PREFACE

Words like "endangered species" and "imperiled wildlife" evoke strong, sometimes conflicting feelings of interest and concern. On one hand we are very troubled by the loss of wildlife due to increasing human impacts on the environment. But we might also worry that further efforts to protect wildlife through regulations, legislation, and other legal means may unreasonably restrict our use of public or even private lands.

The endangered wildlife issue is further complicated by uncertainty as to what exactly needs protection in a given area. Not long ago, a rancher asked me which species are endangered in the San Juans. I began naming a few off the top of my noggin such as river otter and western toad only to realize that, even as a wildlife biologist, the full answer eluded me. How then can we protect wildlife when we do not even know the range of species that need help?

This book is an introduction to imperiled wildlife of the San Juan Ecoregion of Colorado and New Mexico, hereafter referred to as the "Greater San Juans." It includes 110 wild animal and plant species, some of which could vanish from the region within our lifetimes. Aldo Leopold, father of wildlife management in the U.S., was con-



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vinced that to conserve wildlife we need to know the specific needs of the various species in particular places, and see to it that these needs are met in concrete ways (Leopold 1936). The information provided here for each species

should be helpful in this regard. It should be especially useful to people who routinely make decisions affecting wildlife habitat, such as private landowners, farmers, ranchers, real estate developers, public land managers, tribal officials, and county planners.

Most species included in this book are not protected under any national or state endangered species laws. In any event, experience shows that these laws often fail to adequately protect. Clearly what is needed is a much stronger commitment to conserve wildlife at a more basic personal and community level. I'd be less than candid if I failed to say that future prospects for many of the animals and plants profiled here are otherwise very dim.

The conflict between protecting imperiled wildlife and our use of the land is really not about what we want to do. After all, who wants the land stripped of its biological diversity? At the same time, who is not a land user? In reality, the vast majority of us are both "environmentalists" and "resource users." The problem is more about how to get the job done. This I can assure you: if enough caring people make wildlife conservation a genuine part of everyday life and constructively engage friends, neighbors, and business associates, today's conflicts over endangered species will dissipate as quickly as an ephemeral thunderstorm on a summer afternoon high in the San Juan Mountains.

Tony Povilitis
Autumn 1999