

every State and within a short drive of most major cities. These wonderful resources provide opportunities for people of all ages and from all walks of life, and from cities, suburbs, and the rural heartland, to learn about and participate in the effort to preserve the places and wildlife that contribute so much to our Nation's heritage and natural wealth.

The appreciation and protection of wildlife, particularly of endangered or threatened species, is both the right and responsibility of all Americans. Indeed, countless individuals and private volunteer organizations across the United States have already made a significant contribution to wildlife protection. Only by engaging communities in conservation, by taking note of and rewarding community service efforts, and by maintaining diverse approaches to wildlife protection, can we preserve our wildlife today and for future generations.

We set aside this week to celebrate the role that citizens and private volunteer organizations play in engaging in service activities, and in advancing the knowledge, appreciation, and protection of wildlife and the environment. Let us also work to spread this message to broader audiences and encourage all individuals and groups to contribute to this national goal. I urge all Americans, private organizations, businesses, community leaders, elected officials and governmental agencies to do all they can to preserve and value the role of wildlife resources in our lives. This tradition of nature education will continue to teach our children how to be lifelong stewards of the environment and help to build the knowledge and understanding essential to the protection of nature's abundant gifts.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 20 through April 26, 1997, as National Wildlife Week. I ask all Americans to find ways to promote the conservation and protection of our wildlife and wild places.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6994 of April 19, 1997

National Park Week, 1997

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, America made a momentous decision: to set aside and protect in perpetuity an extraordinary part of our young Nation. With the signing of the Yellowstone National Park Act on March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant created the world's first national park, and the succeeding years have proved beyond all doubt the wisdom and foresight of that decision. Known throughout the world for its beauty and the natural wonders that lie within its boundaries, Yellowstone has in-

spired the creation of a multitude of other national parks, both here and in other countries, preserving for future generations the rich natural and cultural legacy of our world.

Today, our 374 national parks protect America's unparalleled wonders and the history of those who have helped shape our land. Our national parks preserve both where we live and who we are. In America's national parks, we see Americans through their experiences—war and peace, tragedy and triumph, struggle and liberty. Our national park sites invite us not only to marvel at the grand geography of Yellowstone or the Great Smokies, but also to explore the innovative genius of Thomas Edison at the Edison National Historic Site in New Jersey, to visit the remains of an ancient civilization at Mesa Verde in Colorado, or to walk the hallways of the Kansas school where the struggle for civil rights ultimately led to the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.

In addition to the parks themselves, the national park spirit thrives in thousands of communities across the country where the National Park Service provides support and technical advice to create close-to-home recreational opportunities and to honor local history through programs such as Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance, the National Register of Historic Places, and National Historic Landmarks. The National Park Service, in partnership with organizations and individuals dedicated to conservation and historic preservation, is ensuring that our national parks touch the lives of as many people as possible, while sparking an interest among our Nation's children in archaeology, ethnography, history, historic landscapes, and historic structures.

Indeed, the national parks remain a magnet for the American public. Every year millions of visitors flock to them—270 million in 1996. Surveying our history and heritage, our national parks let us reach out and touch the past.

As we observe this week, let us remember with gratitude all those who are and have been entrusted with the stewardship of these treasured places. As the parks and the mandate of the National Park Service have evolved, the demands on those who manage these resources have become more complex and the skills required of the National Park Service work force have become more sophisticated. These men and women are the guardians of our cultural and natural treasures, and, on behalf of all Americans, I express my deepest thanks.

This year, National Park Week celebrates the strength of our unique and diverse system of national parks, and I urge all Americans to share in the wonderful experiences these places offer all of us.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 21 through April 27, 1997, as National Park Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON