



Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide  
United States Office  
Annual Report  
1991

## B. Sample projects

Following are some examples of the power of E-LAW:

### 1. Australian sooty owl

This case brought together the spotted owl of the Northwest United States and the sooty owl of Australia. Logging in Chaelundi State Forest in New South Wales was threatening the survival of the sooty owl and other species protected under Australia's Endangered Species Act. An Australian public interest environmental lawyer, seeking to halt the logging, realized that he needed an expert witness to establish the link between habitat destruction and species decline.

E-LAW Australia directed him to E-LAW U.S., which connected him with an American expert who had testified in the U.S. spotted owl cases. That expert recently had done habitat research on Australia's sooty owl and was able to offer crucial testimony in the case.

The court accepted his testimony and ruled for the first time in Australia that habitat destruction constitutes a "taking" of a species under the Endangered Species Act. The court ordered logging to stop. An appeals court upheld this ruling and legislative efforts to override it failed, so the Australian Endangered Species Act worked and destruction of this endangered species' habitat was prevented.

In addition to newspaper reports on the victory in Australia, special reports on E-LAW's role in the case have been distributed by Canada's Environmental News Service, the newsletter of Pegasus Electronic Network in Australia, and the newsletter of the Econet electronic network in the United States. Furthermore, posting the news on E-LAW's own public "computer conferences" has spread the word to Green Net in Europe, Comlink in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and Alternex in Latin America.

### 2. Oil drilling in National Parks (Amazon, Central America)

In Peru, U.S. based Texas Crude planned to drill for oil in the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve. E-LAW Peru attorneys wanted to learn about Texas Crude's operations. E-LAW U.S. was able to use computer databases and network with regulatory agencies and citizen groups to obtain information about Texas Crude's corporate structure, financial position, and record of non-compliance with U.S. environmental laws. Peruvian environmental lawyers used this information in a meeting with the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Texas Crude subsequently announced that it was abandoning its plans to drill in the Reserve. The departure of one company does not end the threat to the resource, so E-LAW Peru remains cautious. E-LAW U.S. has also provided crucial assistance to environmental