

## THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Happy Lunar New Year! Celebrate by this weekend by visiting a park or read this National Recreation and Parks Association [blog post](#) highlighting the many reasons parks benefit from creating Lunar New Year programming and education.

## FEATURED PARK



Photos and facts of your favorite parks, one issue at a time

### Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park Michigan

**FACT 1:** Named by the Ojibwa people for its spiky ridgeline, Porcupine Mountains Wilderness is the largest state park in Michigan, covering about 60,000 acres. A 1928 petition to establish a national park at the site was stymied due to the Great Depression, leaving the state to acquire most of the park's current land in 1944.

**FACT 2:** Sugar maple and hemlock trees dominate much of Porcupine Mountains' forest. With around 35,000 acres of old-growth, the park represents one of the best-preserved examples of the maple-hemlock forest type. It is also one of the **largest** unlogged forests remaining in the eastern US.

Nominate *your* favorite local, state, or national park [here](#) so our subscribers can learn about it.

# PARK PERKS



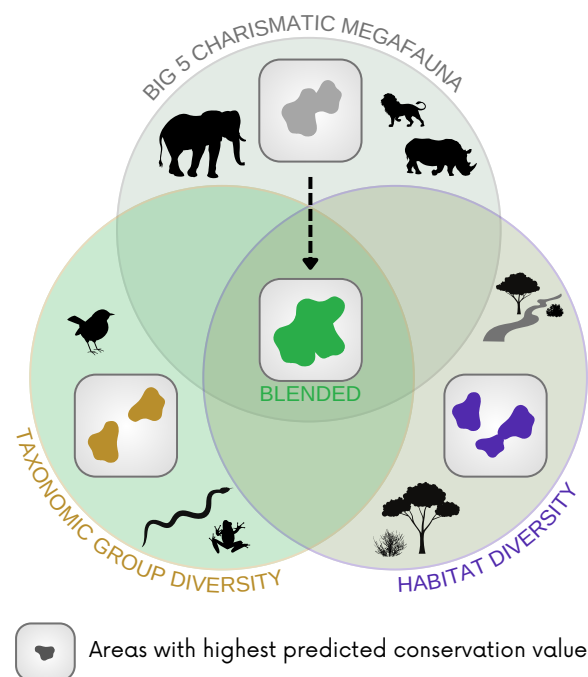
Visualizing key research to show why parks matter

The role of *charismatic megafauna* – meaning large, popular animals like elephants – is controversial within conservation biology. Although these species can attract funding and increase public interest in parks, exclusive attention to their conservation may doom smaller, lesser-known species to extinction. An [article](#) published in 2013 in *Journal of Applied Ecology* helped explore this imbalance and its impacts. Focusing on the **big five** mammals – elephants, lions, leopards, Cape buffalo, and rhinoceroses – of a well-known biodiversity hotspot in southern Africa, the authors assessed how these mammals’ ranges might predict the conservation value of a given area. The team used specialized software to convert habitat and species range data into overlays that separately mapped diversity of the *big five* mammals; other vertebrates like birds, reptiles, and amphibians; and regional habitats. The researchers also mapped areas of key conservation importance, which contain many less-iconic species of invertebrates and plants.

The authors found that the presence of charismatic megafauna, when tied to the measures of taxonomic and habitat diversity, *strongly* predicts the conservation importance of a given area, **even for more obscure species**. So, while not always strong predictors of biodiversity by themselves, charismatic megafauna can act as surrogates for the presence of other species as long as additional major factors are considered. This result means that park planning does not necessarily need to prioritize one group of species over the others. The findings also suggest that conserving popular animals like the *big five* can both attract considerable funding and provide broader protection value for other at-risk species.

## Surrogacy Effectiveness

Modeling conservation value by input type



## PLAY GROUND

Which reptiles don't supervise their young?

snakes; they're very *hands-off*