

From July through December of 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Service published the following proposed and final rules in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The full text of each action can be found on the internet at <http://endangered.fws.gov>.

Final Listing

Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) The dugong, a marine mammal somewhat resembling the manatee, was listed in 1970 as an endangered species throughout its range, which includes tropical and subtropical coastal and inland waters from eastern Africa to the Solomon Islands in the western Pacific. Habitat degradation and illegal hunting reduced the dugong to remnant populations.

Because of a technicality in the ESA, dugongs in the Republic of Palau, an island nation in the western Pacific, were dropped from the law's coverage in 1988. On December 17, 2003, with the full support of the local government, ESA protection was once again extended to the small, vulnerable dugong population in Palau.

Final Reclassification

Missouri Bladderpod (*Lesquerella filiformis*) On October 15, we recognized the improved status of the Missouri bladderpod, an annual in the mustard family (Brassicaceae), by reclassifying it from endangered to the less critical category of threatened. Habitat acquisition and management have benefited some bladderpod sites by allowing the control of competing invasive and nonnative plants. Fencing has protected some populations where cattle grazing posed a threat. The discovery of additional populations also makes the species more secure. Delisting is not yet possible, however, because some sites are still threatened.

Final Delisting Rules

Hoover's Woolly-star (*Eriastrum hooveri*) This plant, an herb in the phlox family (Polemoniaceae), was delisted on October 7. The discovery of additional populations, and the implementation of conservation actions recommended in the species' recovery plan, led to

a determination that the Hoover's woolly-star no longer needs ESA protection. Additionally, researchers found that the plant is more resilient and less vulnerable to disturbance than previously known. The Bureau of Land Management, which administers habitat for a substantial number of the newly discovered populations, will continue to monitor the woolly-star's status.

Truckee Barberry (*Berberis (=Mahonia) sonnei*) Recent work by taxonomists indicates that this plant, an evergreen shrub in the family Berberidaceae once believed endemic to a floodplain along the Truckee River in California, is not a discrete entity and, therefore, does not meet the definition of a species as described in the ESA. It is now considered synonymous with *Berberis repens*, a common and widespread plant. For this reason, we removed *B. sonnei* from the list of threatened and endangered species on October 1.

Sacramento Splittail (*Pogonichthys macrolepidotus*) This fish, a species native to California's Central Valley, was listed in 1999 as threatened due to changes in water flows and water quality, drought, loss of habitat, and the effects of agricultural and industrial pollutants. The listing was challenged, and the U.S. district court sent the issue back to the Service for further consideration. After additional review and public comment periods, the Service found that the threats are being addressed through habitat restoration and water management actions underway to benefit Central Valley fish, including several federally protected species. Accordingly, a "notice of removal" from the ESA list was published September 22 for the Sacramento splittail.

Columbian White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*) On July 24, we published a final rule recognizing two distinct population segments (DPS) of the Columbian white-tailed deer, the Douglas County DPS and the Columbia River DPS, and removed the Douglas County DPS from the list of threatened and endangered wildlife. (See "Partners Restore the Columbian White-tailed Deer" in this edition of the *Bulletin*.) The delisting of the Douglas County DPS will not change the endangered status of the Columbia River DPS, which remains listed by the ESA.

Proposed Delisting Rule

Two Australian Parakeets On September 2, we proposed to delist two birds native to Australia, the scarlet-chested parakeet (*Neophema splendida*) and turquoise parakeet (*Neophema pulchella*). Both species were listed in 1970 as endangered, but a recent review indicates that they have recovered. Wild populations are now stable or increasing, trade in wild-caught specimens is strictly limited, and the species are protected by Australian regulations and by national and international treaties and laws.

Withdrawn Listing Proposal

Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) On September 3, we withdrew our proposal to list the mountain plover, a bird of the Great Plains, as a threatened species. New research indicates that populations are more stable and widespread than originally believed. (See "Growing Plovers on the Plains" in this edition of the *Bulletin*.) Cooperative conservation measures for the mountain plover will continue, however.

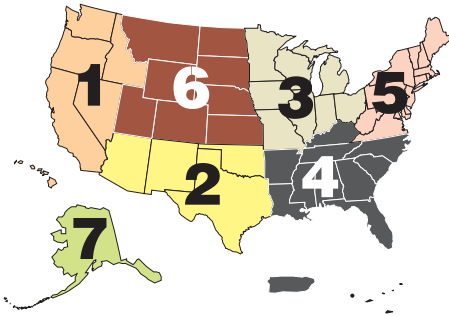
Final Critical Habitat Rules

Fifteen Vernal Pool Species We designated critical habitat on August 6 for 15 species, 4 crustaceans and 11 plants, that depend on vernal or seasonal pools in California and southern Oregon. About 1,184,500 acres (418,000 hectares) fall within the critical habitat boundaries.

Forty-one Hawaiian Plants On July 2, we designated critical habitat for 41 listed plant taxa known historically from the Island of Hawai'i (or the "Big Island"). The areas total about 208,000 acres (84,200 ha).

Proposed Critical Habitat Rule

Peirson's Milk-vetch (*Astragalus magdalenae* var. *peirsonii*) We proposed on August 5 to designate critical habitat for this threatened plant in the desert of Imperial County, California. The proposal encompasses about 52,780 acres (21,360 ha) of open sand dunes.



Regional staffers have reported the following news:

Region 3

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) The successful effort to reintroduce migratory whooping cranes to the eastern United States continued as 20 of the reintroduced whoopers migrated back to Wisconsin on their own from Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida during the spring of 2003. One crane stopped short of Wisconsin and stayed in northern Illinois for the spring and summer, but most remained in and around Wisconsin for the summer. Though primarily staying in the vicinity of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, they also demonstrated appropriate foraging and roosting behavior on a number of other state, federal, and private wetlands. Three juvenile female whoopers made their way to South Dakota. Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) biologists and South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks staff mutually agreed that WCEP would retrieve the three birds and return them to Necedah Refuge in Wisconsin (the original reintroduction site). Unfortunately, one of the birds became stressed after it was retrieved and eventually had to be euthanized.

Sixteen whooping cranes that hatched at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (Maryland) in the spring spent the summer training to follow behind ultralight aircraft. Those whooping cranes began their ultralight-led migration south to Chassahowitzka on October 16, 2003. We hope to add the 16 new cranes from this year's reintroduction to the 20 adult and juvenile whooping cranes from the 2001 and 2002 reintroductions.

Higgin's Eye Pearlymussel (*Lampsilis bigginsi*) As a result of a 2000 Biological Opinion that determined jeopardy for the Higgin's eye pearlymussel from operation and maintenance of the Army Corps of Engineer's Upper Mississippi River Nine-foot Channel Project, we are working with the Corps' on the Interagency Mussel Coordination Team to carry out conservation measures identified in the Biological Opinion. Those measures include genetic studies, mussel culture at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery, culture in cages in the Upper Mississippi River and tributaries, stocking juvenile mussels, relocating adults, stocking fish inoculated with glochidia (parasitic mussel larvae), cleaning and stockpiling adult mussels, and survey/monitoring activities. Those activities are presented in the report "Saving the Higgins' Eye Pearlymussel (*Lampsilis bigginsi*) from Extinction: 2002 Status Report on the Accomplishments of the Mussel Coordination Team," found on the web at http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/mussels/documents/mct_2002_status_report.pdf

Recovery plans for the following listed species in Region 3 were completed and made public in September 2003:

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) Destruction of habitat, disturbance, and increased predation rates are described as the main reasons for the endangered status of the Great Lakes population and continue to be the primary threats to its recovery. The remaining birds, whether on the breeding or wintering grounds, mostly inhabit public or undeveloped beaches. These populations are vulnerable to predation and disturbance.

Piping plovers nest on wide sand and cobble beaches with little vegetation and disturbance. These shore and dune areas also support a community of other rare plants and animals, including the threatened Pitcher's thistle, dwarf lake iris, and Houghton's goldenrod. Over the past decade, Great Lakes piping plovers have bred primarily in Michigan and Wisconsin, although occurrence during migration has been recorded in other Great Lakes states. During winter, these birds roost and forage on beaches, dunes, and

sandy and muddy flats of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Public and private efforts to recover the plover are already underway. State and federal agencies and private citizens in Michigan and Wisconsin, and throughout the states where the birds over-winter, are working to protect habitat and manage land uses in areas where many of the piping plovers live.

Lake Erie Water Snake (*Nerodia sipedon insularum*) The Lake Erie water snake is a nonvenomous snake that lives only on the islands and in the waters of the western Lake Erie basin. The recovery plan is the result of several years of effort by scientists familiar with the water snake and its habitat. Most of the population decline can be attributed to intentional and accidental human-induced mortality. Habitat loss and degradation, such as occur through development of the snake's shoreline habitat with marinas and houses, are other significant threats. The recovery plan recommends monitoring the snake populations, implementing voluntary programs to manage both public and private land where the snake occurs, participating in outreach to ensure that visitors to Lake Erie islands are aware of the significance of this unique animal, and conducting research to ensure that major threats are alleviated.

Mead's Milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) Mead's milkweed is a threatened plant found in eastern Kansas, Missouri, south-central Iowa, and southern Illinois. It has disappeared from Indiana and Wisconsin. The plants grow primarily in tallgrass prairie, especially areas that have not been plowed and are only lightly grazed. Remaining patches of tallgrass prairie continue to be lost throughout the Midwest to agriculture and residential development. Recovery steps proposed in the plan include protection and management of habitat, identification of new populations or potential habitats for reintroduction, and research on restoration, management, and reintroduction techniques.

Tumbling Creek Cavesnail (*Antrobia culveri*) The Tumbling Creek cavesnail is found only in Tumbling Creek in Taney County, Missouri. The

number of cavesnails has significantly decreased over the past few decades, and only a single individual was found within established survey areas between January 11, 2001, and April 22, 2003. However, a small population of approximately 40 individuals exists upstream of the area that is regularly surveyed. The primary cause for the cavesnail's decline appears to be decreased water quality due to increased erosion and pollution in the waters that feed the cave stream, although research is needed to confirm this. The plan recommends steps to protect habitat, monitor contaminants, conduct research on the species, and raise awareness of the cavesnail and its link to good water quality.

Region 5

Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail (*Novisuccinea chittenangoensis*) Mark-release-recapture studies continued during the 2003 field season for this highly endemic, terrestrial snail. Marking studies in 2002 by the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Service's New York Field Office led to a population estimate of 145 to 222 snails. A third year of intensive monitoring and population assessment work is planned for 2004. The combined data should provide an accurate baseline population estimate for the snail. In addition, efforts are underway to complete the draft revised recovery plan.

Bog Turtle (*Clemmys mublenbergii*) The New York Field Office and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation held two workshops in May and June 2003 to increase coordination among state and federal agencies within the New York range of the bog turtle. They were the first workshops of this type in New York and were considered quite successful. The classroom portion included presentations on bog turtle biology and recovery, as well as on various state and federal regulations. The field portion was designed to help agency personnel learn more about the characteristics of potentially suitable habitat.

Seabeach Amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*)

The Service's Long Island Field Office, in partnership with the New York Natural Heritage Program and the Long Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, assisted land managers in the management and surveys of seabeach amaranth on Long Island during the 2003 growing season. Assistance included instruction on survey protocol, participation in data collection, installation of fencing to mark the plants, and supplying fencing equipment and public education signs. The field office also hosted a meeting in May 2003 with stakeholders to coordinate on amaranth management, recovery, and research.

Seabeach amaranth populations on Long Island have increased from 182 plants in 1994 to 190,500 plants in 2002 (2003 data will be available soon). Field office biologists are participating in rangewide efforts to assess amaranth recovery, revise the recovery plan, and develop guidance on management and survey protocols.

Washington Office

In a historic effort to broaden international wildlife conservation planning, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of State brought together decision-makers from throughout the Western Hemisphere to develop strategies for cross-boundary conservation of migratory species and collaboration on wildlife conservation issues.

The Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Conference took place in Termas de Puyehue, Chile, on October 6, 7, and 8, 2003. Attendees included representatives from 25 countries in the Western Hemisphere as well as members from over 40 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and wildlife conservation stakeholders. The products of the meeting included a detailed, prioritized list of issues needing international collaboration; an emerging matrix of tools available from NGO's, international conventions, and government bodies to address these identified needs; and a call for an interim forum to build upon the momentum of the conference.
















FWS attendees at the Migratory Species Conference
USFWS photo

This interim forum will be headed by a committee composed of five government representatives from various regions of the Western Hemisphere, four representatives from the NGO conservation community, and representatives from applicable international conventions. The conference's country representatives unanimously elected Herb Raffaele, Chief of the Service's Division of International Conservation, to chair the interim committee and to ensure that the progress in international collaboration for wildlife conservation made at the conference continues.

Endangered migratory species of the Western Hemisphere that are likely to benefit from enhanced collaboration between nations include imperiled species of cranes, sea turtles, neotropical migratory birds, whales, bats, dugongs, and waterfowl, to name just a few.

BOX SCORE

Listings and Recovery Plans as of February 29, 2004

GROUP	ENDANGERED		THREATENED		TOTAL LISTINGS	U.S. SPECIES W/ PLANS
	U.S.	FOREIGN	U.S.	FOREIGN		
 MAMMALS	65	251	9	17	342	55
 BIRDS	76	175	14	6	271	76
 REPTILES	14	64	22	15	115	33
 AMPHIBIANS	12	8	9	1	30	14
 FISHES	71	11	43	0	125	95
 SNAILS	21	1	11	0	33	23
 CLAMS	62	2	8	0	72	64
 CRUSTACEANS	18	0	3	0	21	13
 INSECTS	35	4	9	0	48	31
 ARACHNIDS	12	0	0	0	12	5
ANIMAL SUBTOTAL	386	516	128	39	1,069	409
 FLOWERING PLANTS	569	1	144	0	714	577
 CONIFERS	2	0	1	2	5	2
 FERNS AND OTHERS	24	0	2	0	26	26
PLANT SUBTOTAL	597	1	147	2	747	607
GRAND TOTAL	883	517	275	41	1,816*	1,016

TOTAL U.S. ENDANGERED: 983 (386 animals, 597 plants)

TOTAL U.S. THREATENED: 275 (128 animals, 147 plants)

TOTAL U.S. LISTED: 1,258 (514 animals**, 744 plants)

* Separate populations of a species listed both as Endangered and Threatened are tallied once, for the endangered population only. Those species are the argali, chimpanzee, leopard, Stellar sea-lion, gray wolf, piping plover, roseate

tern, green sea turtle, saltwater crocodile, and olive ridley sea turtle. For the purposes of the Endangered Species Act, the term "species" can mean a species, subspecies, or distinct vertebrate population. Several entries also represent entire genera or even families.

** Nine animal species have dual status in the U.S.

ENDANGERED Species BULLETIN

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Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington, D.C. 20240

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