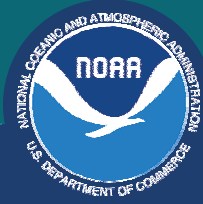


Species of Concern Program 2010 Report



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

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NOAA



Species

There were 3 changes to the Species of Concern list in Fiscal Year 2010: The barndoor skate and night shark were removed from the program based on findings that they no longer met program criteria. Basking sharks in the North Pacific Ocean were added based on concerns on their status. In early 2011 we also added the Salish Sea (Washington, Canada) population of Pacific cod as a Species of Concern. There are now 39 Species of Concern. Five populations of Atlantic sturgeon and largemouth sawfish were proposed for Endangered Species Act listing, and Alabama shad, bumphead parrotfish, Nassau grouper, saltmarsh topminnow, speckled hind, and Hawaiian reef coral became ESA candidate species.

External Grants

After a record year of applications, requests for funding exceeded \$4 million in FY 2010. Five external projects were funded to study a total of 7 species. Regional offices funded 4 additional projects (see page 3) for a total of \$134,656.

Internal Grants

Internal funding of \$300,000 was competitively awarded to 11 of the record 26 projects requesting \$770,000 that were submitted by Science Centers and Regions. These included projects for pink and pinto abalone restoration, sand tiger shark habitat use, filling data gaps in basking shark knowledge, reproductive studies of bumphead parrotfish and humphead wrasse, genetic evaluation of Hawaiian reef corals, involving volunteers in monitoring river herring status, assessing green sturgeon feeding habitat, and gathering baseline data on age and growth of Warsaw grouper and speckled hind. For more information on any of these projects contact the Program Coordinator (see pg. 4).



Photo by Greg Skomal

Basking shark, *Cetorhinus maximus*.

What are Species of Concern?

"Species of Concern" are species or vertebrate populations for which there is concern or uncertainty about their status. Species of Concern are not protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As resources permit, we (NOAA Fisheries) conduct a review of the status of each Species of Concern. NOAA Fisheries believes it is important to highlight species for which additional information and management may be warranted so that Federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and the private sector are aware of which species could benefit from proactive conservation efforts. NOAA has external and internal grant programs to fund such efforts.



Program Activities

Outreach

The national program coordinator presented the program to attendees at the Society for Conservation Biology, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, North American Association of Environmental Educators, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conferences. Over 1000 people were introduced to the program and 1900 pieces of Species of Concern literature (brochures, species lists, and fact sheets) were distributed.

Staff provided training to Regional Fishery Management Council members on the Species of Concern program and SOC species that overlap with those considered by the Councils' to be overfished or undergoing overfishing.



Thorny skate, *Amblyraja radiata*. Courtesy B. Ueberschauer.

120,000 copies of fact sheets were downloaded this year!!

Fact Sheets

Web hit statistics show that the fact sheets were downloaded a total of about 120,000 times during the year, a 25% increase over last year.

About half of the fact sheets had substantive updates this year.

All fact sheets are available for download on the program's website (see pg. 4).



Humphead wrasse, *Cheilinus undulatus*. Courtesy Jack Randall.



Partnerships

A strategic plan is in development to guide the program for the next five years.

The national coordinator began serving on a Science and Mapping Working Group for Freedom to Roam, a coalition of partners to encourage conservation of corridors for animal migration and dispersal, including corridors for marine animals migrating through the ocean.

The program partnered with NOAA Habitat Conservation, Marine Debris, Restoration Center, Coral Reef Conservation and Restoration Center programs on grant proposal review or joint program priorities.

Partners have been essential to the accomplishments of the SOC program!



Green abalone, *Haliotis fulgens*. Chris Grossman.

Policy & Legislation

Both Maine and Massachusetts, Species of Concern external grant, recipients have promulgated new regulations to conserve rainbow smelt.

Delaware, another grantee, is pursuing regulatory changes to limit impacts on sand tiger sharks.

Northeast Region staff continue to serve on the Gulf of Maine Species of Concern Advisory Committee. Southeast Region staff have contributed to the development of a saltmarsh topminnow conservation plan and modifications to Army Corps of Engineer practices to improve Alabama shad passage through a lock in Florida.



Regional and Science Center Accomplishments

Northwest

Green sturgeon: Continued to disseminate the best available scientific information regarding the distribution and relative abundance of Northern DPS green sturgeon to inform NMFS' Section 7 consultations.

Coho salmon: Conducted studies of insecticides as a limiting factor for coho salmon conservation and recovery in urban streams.

Basking shark: Staff led the process to add the North Pacific basking shark to the SOC program.

Southwest

Basking shark: Staff led the process to add the North Pacific basking shark to the SOC program.

Green abalone: Supported cultur-

ing efforts at Redondo SEA lab for future outplanting efforts.

Outreach: Assisted Long Beach Aquarium in the development of an abalone education and outreach program.

Pink abalone: Funded project by graduate student Julia Coates using an artificially produced aggregation of pink abalone in the Point Loma kelp forest as a framework for examining aggregation as a restoration technique, movement behavior over multiple time scales, and reproductive success.

Pacific

Inarticulated brachiopod and Hawaiian reef coral: Funded project titled "Assessment and habitat restoration for two NOAA Species of Concern (*Lingula reevii* and

Montipora dilatata) in Kaneohe Bay" to continue studies of distribution, assessment, and threats to these 2 species.

Continued successful husbandry and outreach project for inarticulated brachiopods and Hawaiian reef corals in Waikiki Aquarium with new funding of \$34,234.

Staff participated in the Hawaiian reef coral ESA status review.

Bumphead parrotfish: Staff participated in the ESA parrotfish status review process.

Outreach:

Continued successful partnership with the Waikiki Aquarium to highlight SOC issues.

[Continued on next page](#)



Publications and Presentations

Popular Articles

Somma, A., *et al.* Conservation and the Endangered Species Act: NMFS' cooperative and proactive approaches. *Our Living Oceans*. Pp. 89-99. NOAA Fisheries.

Meadows, D. NMFS proactive conservation program: An opportunity for Tribes? *Eagle's Nest*. Dec. 2009.

Scientific Publications

Forsman ZH, *et al.* 2010. Ecomorph or Endangered Coral? DNA and Microstructure Reveal Hawaiian Species Complexes: *Montipora dilatata/flabellata/turgescens* & *M. patula/verilli*. *PLoS One* 5(12): e15021.

Lindley, S.T., *et al.* In press. Electronic tagging of green sturgeon reveals population structure & movement among estuaries. *Transactions*

Amer. Fish. Soc.

Lopez, J.D., *et al.* 2011. Distribution, abundance, & habitat characterization of the saltmarsh topminnow. *Estuaries and Coasts* 34:148-158.

Mora, E.A., *et al.* 2009. Do impassable dams & flow regulation constrain the distribution of green sturgeon in the Sacramento River, California? *J. Appl. Ich.* 25(S2): 39-47.

Payne, J., *et al.* In press. Studying movements and survival of marine animals with large-scale acoustic arrays. In: *Life in the World's Oceans*, A. D. McIntyre, ed. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Presentations

Ayer, M.H. *et al.* Laboratory marking of rainbow smelt embryos and larvae and the implications for restoration. *Amer. Fish. Soc.*

Chittaro, P. *et al.* Differential somatic growth rates and population subdivision in cowcod. *Amer. Fish. Soc.*

Elzey, S. *et al.* Improving methods to accurately age rainbow smelt. *Amer. Fish. Soc.*

Forsman, Z. H. *et al.* Can endangered species of coral be distinguished from population level variation? Genes and skeletal microstructure reveal Hawaiian species complexes in *Montipora*. *Evolution* 2010

Hess, J. E. *et al.* Genetic evaluation of stock structure and population bottlenecks in cowcod. *Amer. Fish. Soc.*

Mills, K. Protecting a threatened coastal fish species through collaborative regional research and planning. *Coastal Society*.

Tannehill, J. *et al.* Age, growth, fecundity, abundance, and passage of Alabama shad *Alosa alabamae* in the ACF system. *Georgia AFS*.



NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources

For more information on any of these activities please contact:

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Goals of the Species of Concern Program

- To increase public awareness about these species;
- To identify those species potentially at risk and in need of protective measures before listing under the ESA becomes necessary;
- To identify data deficiencies and uncertainties associated with a species status;
- To work cooperatively with regional co-managers and concerned groups to obtain the information necessary to evaluate species status and threats;
- To identify conservation opportunities; and,
- To work with Federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and the public to act proactively to conserve the species.



Mangrove rivulus, *Rivulus marmoratus*, in damp terrestrial habitat where they can breathe air. (c) Scott Taylor.

Regional Accomplishments (Continued)



Norton Chan, Aquarist at Waikiki Aquarium, measuring the width of a *Lingula*. Kelsey Ige, Waikiki Aquarium.

Southeast

Saltmarsh topminnow: Program representative attended Conservation Action Plan conference and serves as peer reviewer of Florida status review.

Key silverside: Staff serves as peer reviewer of Florida status review.

Alabama shad: Funded and carried out species review. Staff participated in a symposium regarding fish passage operations.

Large-tooth sawfish: Staff contributed to the status review and

proposed rule to list the species as endangered under the ESA.

Outreach: Conducted outreach and distributed SOC materials to local aquaria, marine discovery events, and marine sanctuaries.

Northeast

Atlantic sturgeon: Northeast and Southeast Region staff contributed to the development of the proposed rule to list 5 DPSs of this species under the ESA.

Educational kits were created to augment the SCUTES (Students Collaborating to Undertake Tracking Efforts for Sturgeon) program. The kits contain activities for use in the SCUTES curriculum.

Porbeagle shark: Staff assisted in evaluating the petition to list the species under the ESA which ultimately led to a negative 90-day finding in July of 2010 that determined that ESA listing was not warranted.

Cusk: Held a threats assessment

meeting with experts to qualitatively assess threats to this data poor species.

River herring (alewife and blueback herring): A workshop focused on river herring counts in Massachusetts was held to help make such data as useful as possible to management. Approximately 40 people participated from a variety of organizations.

Atlantic bluefin tuna: Staff assisted in evaluating the petition and subsequent status review to assess whether to list the species under the ESA

Barndoor skate: The process to remove barndoor skate from the SOC program was led by program staff.

Outreach: Staff presented SCUTES at NEAFWA and WSCS meetings and numerous elementary schools. Outreach and distribution of SOC materials occurred at various workshops and saltwater fishing shows. New SOC outreach materials are being developed.