



## PRESS RELEASE

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## U.S. Military Lands Are Habitat for Hundreds of Species at Risk, Study Finds

*Arlington, Virginia* — Hundreds of species at risk are found on Department of Defense installations throughout the United States, according to a new study prepared by NatureServe for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Management guidelines being developed for many of these plants and animals can help protect them and their habitats, reducing the need for federal listing of the species, while helping the armed forces to meet their military training mission.

The study was sparked by collaboration between the DoD and the Fish and Wildlife Service, which share the goal of preventing plants and animals found on DoD lands from declining and eventually needing federal listing. While species that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are already the focus of intense conservation efforts, NatureServe's study looked instead at so-called "species at risk"—defined for the purposes of this study as those that are rare but are not protected under the ESA.

"The Defense Department has a strong commitment to protecting and improving biodiversity on the lands that we manage for the American people," said Alex Beehler, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health. "It is in our mutual interest to safeguard the natural resources needed for this great country to thrive."

The 25 million acres managed by the DoD are home to more federally listed species and imperiled species than any other federal lands, including even national parks and national wildlife refuges. DoD installations are often islands of biodiversity within increasingly developed landscapes, which raises difficult natural resource management issues. Key findings of the assessment include:

- Of the 729 DoD installations analyzed, 224 (30%) contain species at risk, representing a total of 523 different species, two-thirds of which are plants.
- Just 47 of these 523 species are currently identified as candidates for federal listing under the ESA. The remainder are considered critically imperiled or imperiled based on NatureServe's widely used method for assessing conservation status.
- Twenty-four of these species are known to exist only on individual DoD installations and nowhere else in the world. For 82 species at risk in all, at least half of their worldwide occurrences are found on individual installations, underscoring the importance of DoD conservation efforts.

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- Geographic patterns of species imperilment on military lands are consistent with nationwide patterns, with particularly high numbers of species at risk occurring on installations in Hawaii, central and southern California, southern New Mexico, and parts of Florida. The highest numbers of species at risk were found at Schofield Barracks Military Reservation in Hawaii (46 species), Makua Military Reservation in Hawaii (36), Lualualei Naval Reservation in Hawaii (33), San Clemente Island Naval Reservation in California (27), and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida (23).

“It is vitally important that DoD know the location and condition of its rare and imperiled species,” said Peter Boice, director of the DOD Legacy Program, which is funding the project. “This information allows DoD to prioritize its management actions, minimize the potential adverse impacts on military training by avoiding species’ listings, and develop partnerships to enhance protection efforts.”

“Many Department of Defense lands are still wild, relatively untouched, and absolutely critical to the survival of America’s natural legacy,” said Mark Schaefer, NatureServe’s president and CEO. “The military’s commitment to voluntarily protecting species at risk should be encouraged and applauded.”

In a further phase of the study, management guidelines are being developed for key species at four DoD installations. Scientists from state natural heritage programs are working cooperatively with biologists and natural resource managers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and each DoD installation to develop the guidelines. The species and installations involved in this pilot project are:

- **Army:** Round leaf four o’clock (*Mirabilis rotundifolia*) on Fort Carson in Colorado
- **Navy:** San Clemente Island fox (*Urocyon littoralis clementae*) on San Clemente Island Naval Reserve in California
- **Marines:** Coastal goldenrod (*Solidago villosicarpa*) on Camp Lejeune in North Carolina
- **Air Force:** Florida bog frog (*Rana okaloosae*) on Eglin Air Force Base in Florida

Management guidelines are expected to be developed for many additional at-risk species as funding becomes available. These guidelines not only can assist DoD resource managers, but will be valuable as well to other public land managers and private landowners facing similar issues.

Detailed results of the study with accompanying maps are available on the NatureServe website at [www.natureserve.org/prodServices/speciesatRiskdod.jsp](http://www.natureserve.org/prodServices/speciesatRiskdod.jsp).

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**NatureServe** is a non-profit conservation group dedicated to providing the scientific information and technology needed to guide effective conservation action. NatureServe represents a network of 75 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America that collect and analyze information on plants, animals, and ecosystems. NatureServe is a leading source for detailed scientific information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. Visit us on the web at [www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org).

The **Legacy Resource Management Program** was established by Congress in 1990 to provide financial assistance to the Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to preserve our natural and cultural heritage. The program assists DoD in protecting and enhancing resources while supporting military readiness. A Legacy project may involve regional ecosystem management initiatives, habitat preservation efforts, archaeological investigations, invasive species control, Native American consultations, and/or monitoring and predicting migratory patterns of birds and animals. For more information, see [www.dodlegacy.org/legacy/index.htm](http://www.dodlegacy.org/legacy/index.htm).