

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office
1340 Financial Blvd #234
Reno, NV 89502
775-861-6300
Fax – 861-6301
<http://nevada.fws.gov>

News Release



For Immediate Release
Date: May 30, 2007

Contact: Jeannie Stafford
(775) 861-6300

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO INITIATE STATUS REVIEW OF MT. CHARLESTON BLUE BUTTERFLY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced it has completed its evaluation of the petition to add the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly (*Icaricia shasta charlestonensis*) to the federal list of threatened and endangered species and determined substantial scientific information exists to warrant a more in-depth examination. The Service will conduct a full status review of the species and determine whether to propose listing the species as either threatened or endangered.

“Our finding is based on scientific information contained in the petition indicating listing the butterfly may be warranted,” said Bob Williams, Field Supervisor for the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office. “The finding does not mean we have decided it is appropriate to list the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly. We will be conducting a more thorough review of all scientific information available and I encourage anyone with relevant information concerning the status of the butterfly and its habitat to provide it to us so it can be considered in the review.”

The Service published this determination in the May 30, 2007, *Federal Register*. This finding is the first step in a process that triggers a more thorough review of all the scientific and commercial information available about the status of the butterfly. The in-depth review, known as a 12-month finding, includes a request for input from the public and should be complete within one year from the date of this publication. This status review will determine whether the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly warrants listing as a threatened or endangered species. If listed, the species would be afforded the full range of protections available under the Endangered Species Act, including prohibitions on killing, harming or otherwise "taking" a species.

To ensure a comprehensive status review, the Service is soliciting information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, tribes, the scientific community, industry, and all interested parties regarding the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly's historical and current status and distribution, its ecology, ongoing conservation measures for the species and its habitat, and threats to the species and its habitat.

Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

1) Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.

2) Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made.

3) Listing is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the Federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk.

In October 2005, the Service received a petition from The Urban Wildlands Group, Inc., requesting the Service list the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly as a threatened or endangered species under the emergency listing provision of the Endangered Species Act.

The Mt. Charleston blue butterfly is known to have inhabited fifteen locations since 1928. Three of these locations (estimated to encompass fewer than 9 acres of habitat) are currently known to be occupied.

The Mt. Charleston blue butterfly is a distinctive subspecies of the wider ranging Shasta blue butterfly (*Icaricia shasta*), a member of the Lycaenidae family (little butterfly family). The subspecies is known to occur only at high elevations of the Spring Mountains, located approximately 25 miles west of Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. The butterfly requires open habitat that supports its larval host plant, Torrey's milkvetch (*Astragalus calycosus* var. *mancus*), which grows between 5,000 to 10,800 feet on the east side of the Spring Mountains. The core colonies for the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly are located on less than 9 acres in Kyle and Lee Canyons, on lands managed by the Forest Service in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The wingspan of the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly ranges from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch. Males are dark to dull iridescent blue and females are brown with a blue overlay. Their underside is gray, with a pattern of black spots, brown blotches and pale wing veins to give it a mottled appearance.

Anyone wishing to submit information regarding the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly may do so by writing to the Field Supervisor, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89130. Comments and information must be received by July 30, 2007, or send by fax to (702) 515-5231.

For more information about the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly and this finding, please visit the Service's web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/nevada>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

-End-