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Bat, snail, and popular plant may need endangered species protection

Fish and Wildlife Service to Gather More Information

More research is needed on three species before U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials can determine whether to add them to the threatened and endangered species list.

More scientific and commercial information will be compiled for the Venus flytrap, located in the Carolinas; oblong rocksnail, located in Alabama; and tricolored bat, located in 38 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The Service and its partners will continue to research the species' life history, biological requirements and habitats to develop a [Species Status Assessment](#) (SSA) and 12-month finding. A 12-month finding is a decision after the SSA regarding whether the species warrants listing under the [Endangered Species Act](#) (ESA).

Today's decision, known as a [90-day finding](#), is in response to multiple petitions for these species to receive federal protection. The 90-day finding decided these petitions presented substantial scientific or commercial information to indicate that the petitioned actions may be warranted.

- [Venus flytrap](#) - The plant hailed by Charles Darwin as “one of the most wonderful plants in the world” is in decline. The widely recognized insect-eating plant naturally occurs within a narrow range of longleaf pine habitat in southeastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina, but has been lost from large portions of its historic range. Due to its popularity in the horticulture trade, this species has been the subject of much selective breeding. Prized by plant collectors worldwide, there is a long history of collecting Venus flytrap from its native habitats. Given the popularity of this species worldwide, collection pressures have increased exponentially over the past 30 years. Once found in 21 counties in North Carolina and three in South Carolina, the Venus flytrap can now only be found in 15 counties in North Carolina and one in South Carolina – 125 populations now reduced to only 71. Population declines are primarily due to

drastic changes in the plant's habitat, the result of fire suppression, conversion to agriculture, silviculture, and residential and commercial development. Poaching also remains a significant threat.

- **Oblong rocksnail** - The oblong rocksnail is a small, aquatic snail found only in the Cahaba River in the Mobile River Basin of Alabama. Threats to the species include pollution from agricultural activities and urban/suburban sprawl, which contribute to habitat degradation. The snail occurred historically at seven localities but was presumed extinct after going undetected for 70 years. In 2011, the oblong rocksnail was rediscovered on a single shoal, which now represents the known range-wide distribution of the species.
- **Tricolored bat** – The tricolored bat is a hibernating, insect-eating, flying mammal found in 38 States and the District of Columbia; four Canadian provinces; Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. During the spring, summer, and fall, the tricolored bat uses forested and other habitat types to hunt for insects and travel between roosts and foraging areas. Compared to other bats, tricolored bats often enter winter hibernation sites earlier and emerge later in the spring. The tricolored bat, along with eight other North American bats, is currently being affected by white-nose syndrome (WNS), which is caused by a fungus that thrives in colder environments like the caves and mines where bats hibernate. WNS causes injury to bats' skin and disrupts their energy balance, often leading to mortality in winter and early spring. Some colonies of bats have experienced 100 percent decreases due to WNS. WNS has been confirmed in 31 States and 5 Canadian provinces.

This warranted finding sets in motion the process to further review the species with an SSA, which is an analytical approach developed by the Service to deliver foundational science for informing all ESA decisions. To ensure this SSA is comprehensive, the Service is requesting information on the following:

- (1) The subspecies' biology, range, and population trends;
- (2) The factors that are the basis for making a listing under section 4(a) of the ESA:
 - Damage to or destruction of a species' habitat;
 - Overutilization of the species for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
 - Disease or predation;
 - Inadequacy of existing protection; and
 - Other natural or manmade factors that affect the continued existence of the species.
- (3) The potential effects of climate change on the subspecies and its habitat;
- (4) Information specific to a subspecies (e.g., taxonomy of the entity, information about its status in a particular area, or information that may be used in a possible rule outlining exemptions possible under Section 4(d) of the ESA for the conservation of the subspecies); and,
- (5) What, if any, critical habitat should be designated if the subspecies is proposed for listing, and why such habitat meets the requirements of Section 4 of the ESA.

Information will be accepted for the venus flytrap, oblong rocksnail, and tri-colored bat, through the Federal eRulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>. Information may also be mailed using the address described below.

(1) Electronically: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> In the Search box, enter (docket number). You may submit information by clicking on “Comment Now!” If your information will fit in the provided comment box, please use this feature of <http://www.regulations.gov>, as it is most compatible with our information review procedures. If you attach your information as a separate document, our preferred file format is Microsoft Word. If you attach multiple comments (such as form letters), our preferred format is a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel.

(2) By hard copy: Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: [Insert appropriate docket number]; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

We request that you send information only by the methods described above. We will post all information received on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.