



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW Time (6:37)

**GREAT LAKES PIPING PLOVER (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH LEE BENDER
AND DAVID PADDOCK)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

PROCEEDINGS

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: Thanks to a program to breed the Wyoming toad in captivity and reintroduce it into its historic range, one of the most endangered amphibians in the country is now on the road to recovery.

This is Sarah Leon for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Joining me today is Lee Bender and David Paddock, both from the Saratoga National Fish Hatchery. Hi, guys. How are you today?

MR.PADDOCK: We're doing good.

MR. BENDER: Good.

MS. LEON: Great. I've mentioned this interesting program at your hatchery that actually breeds the Wyoming toad. But before I get ahead of myself, what can you tell our listeners about this species?

MR. BENDER: The toad's historic range is restricted within 30 miles of Laramie, Wyoming. The toad lives around the flood plains and seepage lakes of the Laramie and the Little Laramie Rivers.

The toad was first described back in 1946 by George Baxter. Its population began declining in the 1960s and 1970s. It was thought to be extinct by the mid-1980s.

A population was found at Mortenson Lake in 1987. A small number of these toads were brought into facilities for captive breeding 1988.

MS. LEON: All right. I understand that Saratoga National Fish Hatchery was one of the first to propagate an endangered amphibian; is this correct?

MR.PADDOCK: Yes, it is.

MS. LEON: Can you tell our listeners about your captive propagation project?

MR.PADDOCK: We first start off by pairing up the individual toads that we have using a studbook. Basically, the studbook keeps track of all the family trees and the individual toads. We do this so that we can preserve as much genetics as we can possibly keep.

Then once we have those pairs established, we do hibernate the pairs for about 6 weeks in basically a glorified refrigerator. That controls the temperature and the humidity within it. Shortly after, those toads will come out of hibernation.

We put them in aquariums that have plastic aquarium plants in them. We do inject the toads with hormones and play Wyoming toad calls in the background for them, and we get them to breed that way. Usually by the next day they will lay their eggs on the aquarium plants, and within about 3 days they'll hatch out.

We usually keep the tadpoles here for about 2 to 3 weeks before we go ahead and release them out at our release sites.

MS. LEON: All right. Now, the recovery of this species doesn't stop at the hatchery. As I understand, the hatchery's program is just part of a larger effort to breed this endangered amphibian.

Can you tell us about some of the other key conservation partners involved in this huge effort?

MR. BENDER: Currently there's two federal facilities that are housing and breeding toads; Saratoga National Fish Hatchery, and the Cheyenne ES Office has a facility at Red Butte near Laramie.

There are also eight American Zoo and Aquarium Association accredited zoos that house the toads. Como Zoo in Minnesota, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado, Detroit Zoo in Michigan, Henry Doorly Zoo in Nebraska, Toledo Zoo in Ohio, Mississippi River Zoo and Aquarium in Iowa, Kansas City Zoo in Missouri, and the Toronto Zoo in Canada.

Also, the Laramie River Conservation District has established two Safe Harbor Agreements where tadpoles are released. They're also currently seeking other sites.

And the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database at the University of Wyoming has a crew that monitors these Safe Harbor sites. Federal employees and members of the AZA accredited zoos survey at Mortenson Lake.

MS. LEON: All right. You two were recently named Endangered Species Recovery Champions for your involvement in this large initiative. Lee, David, can you tell us what this award meant to you?

MR. BENDER: Well, I think it's heaven. Hatchery personnel receiving this award is a great way to spotlight hatcheries and show that we can branch out and not only do mitigation fish work but also species recovery work.

MR.PADDOCK: I was very surprised to get the word, but it was nice for the Wyoming toad to get some recognition. When you think of an endangered species, though, Wyoming toad is not exactly one of the first ones that comes to mind. They're definitely not what most people would perceive as cute and cuddly, majestic, or anything like that. But with so many amphibian species being in trouble worldwide, it also helps bring the plight of all amphibians to the forefront.

MS. LEON: All right. It's obvious that you two are doing a great job helping to recover this species. In fact, you've released 48,000 since you took on this propagation program in 1997.

Can you tell us what the future for this species looks like?

MR.PADDOCK: We are seeing some encouraging things out at our release sites. One of our first release sites, Mortenson Lake, we have not released any more tadpoles or toads at that release site since 2003. We have been still monitoring that site and there are still toads there. We are finding some reproduction there, as well. So that is definitely encouraging.

This is not the only release site that we've seen per se wild reproduction. At a different release site, there is another site that we have seen natural production at as well. So it appears that there is hope for the toad.

MS. LEON: Thank you both, Lee and David, for your time. It was a real pleasure having you two on.

MR. BENDER: Thank you.

MR.PADDOCK: Thank you.

MS. LEON: For the US Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon. Thanks for listening.