



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

**TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW Time (8:02)**

**CASEYS JUNE BEETLE (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH ALISON ANDERSON)**

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

PROCEEDINGS

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: Hello there. This is Sarah Leon for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I'm on the phone today with Alison Anderson, our Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office Entomologist. Hi, Alison, how are you today?

MS. ANDERSON: Not bad at all, how are you, Sarah?

MS. LEON: I'm doing great, Alison, thanks. Could you tell us about Caseys June beetle today?

MS. ANDERSON: Sure. Caseys June beetle is a June beetle and most people actually are familiar with the common June beetle. Those are the little brown copper colored beetles that stumble into your house in the evening often and they're about a medium sized beetle. This beetle, it's about less than an inch in size, but still a little bit bigger than the common June beetle. It is also distinguished from them by having some light tan to cream colored stripes down its back. Because it's a desert species, it's pretty hairy in appearance and kind of dusty looking often because it has dust stuck in the hair.

Other than that, there's a difference between the males and females, if you picked one up to the untrained eye, you probably couldn't tell the difference. But the biggest difference is that females are flightless. They can't fly. They come out of burrows in the ground about dusk, starting sometime in early April, and then they emit a pheromone,

which is a scent that attracts the males who do fly. So the males come out about the same time, early April, just about dusk during the evening, and then they start flying around. And the females emit this scent and they find them and mate.

The flight season is usually early April through mid to late May. Right now, the beetle is – well, it used to be, we have collection records from Palm Springs proper all the way south to Palm Desert, primarily up against the foothills of the mountain. Where we know that they are currently is really restricted to just Southern Palm Springs itself. So they are found in association with washes, waterways and then what we call the alluvial flood plain, which is an area where rich, organic debris are deposited during floods.

MS. LEON: I understand the story behind this species' decline is one of habitat loss. Is this correct?

MS. ANDERSON: That is. That's absolutely – there's nobody out there shooting June beetles or trapping them, except for when they go to look for them, we trap them in lights and then release them. Really it has to do with building and it's the type of habitat that I talked about just a minute ago, this alluvial flood plain where they do seem to occupy the washes, but it makes sense that when you have a severe flash flood every ten years, 20 years or so, a flash flood that's strong enough to really scour out the wash, it'll probably kill most of the beetles.

So they need these more upland habitats and these alluvial flood plains as a refuge, a refugia, where they can go back and re-colonize the wash after these floods and we think they probably do a lot of breeding and reproduction in the areas associated with the washes. But they need these upland habitats and that's where we used to find them a lot. Unfortunately, that's also where people like to build houses in Palm Springs. We also have the necessary flood control structures facilities like levees, detention basins.

Now, those are very important, but they also are likely to destroy or damage Caseys June beetle habitat and our challenge is to find a way to conserve the beetle, but at the same time ensure the safety of people and their property.

MS. LEON: Caseys June beetle is currently a candidate for listing. What's being done to help improve the status of this species so that it won't need the protection of the Endangered Species Act?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, we are still kind of in the planning and the building up, coordinating stage on the actions. So what we're trying to do is complete a final determination and we're working on that. We have the proposed listing rule and now we're working on the final determination. We're in ongoing coordination with all of the stakeholders, with the city, the tribe. There's also a gated private community where one of the best populations we know of the beetle is. We're in ongoing coordination with those landowners to try and determine how to preserve this species.

Previously back in the 1990's, the only major population that we knew of that still existed was in an area that has since been mostly developed and we're not even sure that area that was occupied is still occupied at all. So what we're trying to do is make sure that we know where all of the occupied habitat patches are. Later in the early 2000's, we discovered this new population in this gated community called Smoke Tree Ranch. We didn't know about that before. That's really important. In 2006, we discovered another occupied patch of habitat that's the Eastern most one, in a small lot off the State Route 111.

So this year there will be surveys that we're funding to see if there are any other small patches of habitat within the historic range that are still occupied that we can prioritize for conservation. And we're working with researchers such as University of California Riverside, researchers and other people in the field to try to get as much information as possible about areas where we can prioritize for conservation.

MS. LEON: I can imagine that it's somewhat of a challenge trying to get people interested in an insect's recovery. Can you tell our listeners why we should care about this particular species' recovery?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, sure. I think it's important to realize that the purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved, which we also depend on. People depend on ecosystems, at the very least, for quality of life. They provide a lot of clean air, clean water, pollinators for the food that we eat, that kind of thing. And in Southern California, we have a really high diversity of habitat types, so we're fortunate to have all different types of ecosystems: coastal, inland plains, mountains and desert.

We have many what are called narrow endemic species. For example, for a Caseys June beetle, the habitat type that it occupies is this really narrow transition from the mountains to the desert from the Coachella Valley. And what I've been told is that the San Jacinto Mountain there above Palm Springs actually has the steepest incline in elevation of any mountain in the continental U.S. So you can go from the desert, you can take the cable car up to the snowy mountaintop in many times of the year. It's quite an abrupt transition.

So we have this very narrow area where these alluvial flood plains are what the beetles inhabit. It's a unique habitat type and I think it's really important for us in California to conserve these habitats and these narrow endemic species in order to retain the richness of our natural resources. That is the unique habitats and the genetic diversity of the species that occupy them.

Another reason is if we know enough about the species, especially with insects, that they're declining, that they're starting to go away, that we're concerned about them, then we should be concerned because that means the ecosystem, the system on which they depend that has functioned for thousands of years, maybe more, to support them is now

failing in that function. Somehow it no longer supports this species and we depend on those ecosystems for a lot of things, too.

MS. LEON: Thank you so much, Alison, for taking the time to speak with us today. It was a real pleasure having you on.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, you're very welcome. It was a pleasure.

MS. LEON: For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon.