



U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office

Conserving the Biological Diversity of the Great Basin, Eastern Sierra, and Mojave Desert

Questions & Answers Spring Mountains Acastus Checkerspot Butterfly 12-Month Finding

September 26, 2012

Q. What is the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly and where does the subspecies live?

- A. The Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly (*Chlosyne acastus robusta*) is a subspecies of the sagebrush checkerspot butterfly (*Chlosyne acastus*) belonging to the Nymphalidae family (brush-footed butterflies). The subspecies is only known to occur in the Spring Mountains in Clark and Nye counties, Nev., at elevations ranging from approximately 5,900 to 8,900 feet above sea level.

The butterfly has been observed in 17 areas. Four of these areas are currently the only locations where known colonies occur. A colony is “a local, isolated population.” The remaining 13 areas are referred to as incidental observations or sighting areas, where intermittent observations of a few butterflies were recorded at a location. Observations at incidental sighting areas, and the potential for subsequent scattering of individual butterflies, could indicate the presence of undiscovered additional colonies.

Q. Why did the Service complete a 12-month finding under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly?

- A. This finding was prepared in response to a formal petition received on September 18, 2009, from Bruce M. Boyd, asking the Service to list the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly as an endangered species under emergency listing provisions of the ESA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determined that an emergency listing action was not warranted. The ensuing 90-day finding determined the butterfly might warrant protection under the ESA, which resulted in the 12-month status review.

Q. What were the results of the 12-month finding?

- A. The Service found that the best scientific and commercial data available indicates the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly does not warrant listing as threatened or endangered at this time.

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Q. What kinds of threats might the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly face?

A. The Service determines threats to a species based upon five factors:

- (1) The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range;
- (2) Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
- (3) Disease or predation;
- (4) The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or
- (5) Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence (fire suppression, collecting, etc.).

Based on our review of the best available scientific and commercial information pertaining to the five factors, the Service found that there are no threats of sufficient imminence, intensity, or magnitude to indicate that the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly is in danger of extinction (endangered), or likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future (threatened).

Q. Has there been a decline in the population of Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterflies?

A. Not necessarily — the best available information indicates that numbers are low; however, it does not suggest a significant change in distribution or abundance of the butterfly.

Q. What about the impacts of human activities on the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly? Wouldn't the butterfly be placed in danger by wildfires, fire suppression, and butterfly collectors?

A. Fire suppression has impacted other butterfly species in the Spring Mountains, but the Service has no evidence that the larval host plant for the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly has been reduced in abundance and distribution as a result of fire suppression. Additionally, while we are aware of butterfly collection in the Spring Mountains, the Service has no evidence of population abundances of the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly being impacted by collection. We are currently working with the U.S. Forest Service to change collection permitting and prohibitions to avoid any potential future threats that could occur from collection.

Q. What are the Service's next steps regarding the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly?

A. Even though listing the butterfly at this time is not warranted, we will continue to monitor the subspecies' status. Additionally, the Service asks the public to submit any new information that becomes available concerning the threats to the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly or its habitat at any time.

Q. What kind of additional or new information does the Service want?

A. The Service requests that interested parties submit any new information on the status of and threats to the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly as the information becomes available to them. Natural history and distribution information, in particular, will help the Service monitor and focus habitat conservation efforts for this subspecies.

Q. How does the public or any interested party provide information?

A. The information can be mailed or faxed to the address or fax number listed below.

Q. Where can more information about the Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot butterfly, including copies of the 12-month finding, be found?

A. This finding is available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> and <http://www.fws.gov/nevada/>, Docket Number FWS-R8-ES-2010-0077. Supporting documents used in preparing this finding are available for inspection by appointment, during normal business hours at the Service's Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office at 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, NV, 89130; telephone (702) 515-5230; facsimile (702) 515-5231. Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the above address or fax number.

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