



Fall 2011

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Photo by Richard Sniezko/USFS

Whitebark Pine

In July 2011, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determined whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) warranted protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that adding the species to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants was precluded by the need to address other listing actions of a higher priority.

When a warranted but precluded finding is made for a species, the Service classifies it as a candidate for listing. While candidate species receive no statutory protection under the ESA, inclusion on the candidate list promotes cooperative conservation efforts for these species.

Whitebark pine typically occurs on cold and windy high-elevation or high-latitude sites in western North America. It is a slow-growing, long lived tree with a life span over 1,000 years and is considered a stone pine because of its stone-like seeds.

There are only five species of stone pines recognized worldwide, and whitebark pine is the only stone pine that occurs in North America. Stone pines have five pine needles per needle cluster, cones that stay on the tree, and wingless seeds that remain fixed to the cone and cannot be dislodged by the wind. Because whitebark pine seeds cannot be wind-disseminated, primary seed dispersal occurs by Clark's

New State Supervisor



"I am looking forward to this great opportunity to carry out the mission of the Service in Nevada and build upon existing partnerships to conserve Nevada's species and their habitats. Idaho and Nevada share many similar conservation landscapes so I am confident it will be a smooth transition."

Edward (Ted) Koch will now be filling the role as the new State Supervisor for the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office. Ted will be supervising all the Service's ecological services programs in Nevada which includes offices located in both Reno and Las Vegas.

Ted has 13 years of experience with the Service, most recently as the Service's Bull Trout Coordinator in Boise, Idaho. He has a B.S. in Environmental Biology from Southern Connecticut State University and an M.S. in Zoology from Idaho State University and has experience in implementing every aspect of the ESA.

His previous assignments include: Assistant Regional Director for Budget and Administration in the

Service's Southwest Regional Office; staff to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks; acting Majority Staff Director for the Fisheries, Wildlife and Water Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate for Idaho's Senator Mike Crapo; and Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, Office of Economic Assistance in Portland, Oregon.

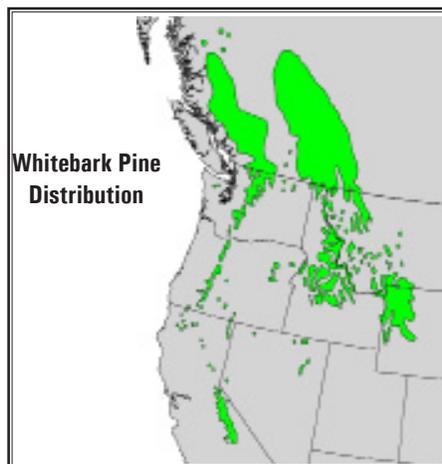
He has published several articles on a variety of conservation and policy subjects, and one book, "The Amphibians and Reptiles of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks." He has served on the boards of several private conservation organizations, most recently as president of the board of the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley.

Whitebark Pine (Continued)

nutcrackers in addition to other birds or animals that forage on its nutritious seeds.

Approximately 44 percent of the whitebark pine's range occurs in the United States in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, and Washington. The remaining 56 percent of the species range occurs in British Columbia and Alberta, Canada.

Some of the threats to the whitebark pine include habitat loss and mortality from white pine blister rust, mountain pine beetle, catastrophic fire and fire suppression, and environmental effects resulting from



climate change. Whitebark pine is experiencing an overall long-term pattern of decline, even in areas originally thought to be mostly immune from these threats. Recent

predictions indicate a continuing downward trend within the majority of its range. While individual trees may persist, given current trends, the Service anticipates whitebark pine forests will likely become extirpated and their ecosystem functions will be lost in the foreseeable future. On a landscape scale, the species appears to be in danger of extinction, potentially within as few as two to three whitebark pine generations or the next 120 to 180 years.

Mojave Desert Tortoise Revised Recovery Plan



Michael Burroughs documents information on a desert tortoise (top) and Roy Averill-Murray (right) attaches a transmitter to a desert tortoise, both in the River Mountains

This August, the Service released a revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave desert tortoise. The revised Recovery Plan takes a new approach to reversing tortoise population declines through a coordinated effort of science-based implementation and evaluation of conservation actions. Regional recovery implementation teams will bring together partners from land management, scientific, conservation, and land-use groups to work together with the Service on implementing, tracking, and evaluating recovery actions.

The ESA directs the Service to develop recovery plans for the conservation and survival of a listed species and to periodically review and update those plans. For instance, the revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave desert tortoise provides a description of the species and its habitat, summarizes the threats that caused the species to be listed under the ESA, and

outlines actions by federal, tribal, and state agencies and other organizations to remove the threats so that the species is conserved into the future, and provides measurable criteria for determining when the species is recovered. Recovery plans do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that actions be implemented.

Strategic elements within the revised Recovery Plan include the following: 1) Develop, support, and build partnerships to facilitate recovery; 2) protect existing populations and habitat, instituting habitat restoration where necessary; 3) augment depleted populations in a strategic, experimental manner; 4) monitor progress toward recovery, including population trend and effectiveness monitoring; 5) conduct

applied research and modeling in support of recovery efforts within a strategic framework; and 6) implement a formal adaptive management program that integrates new information and utilizes conceptual models that link management actions to predicted responses by desert tortoise populations or their habitat.



The emphasis on partnerships in the revised Recovery Plan will direct and maintain focus on implementing recovery actions as well as a system to track implementation and effectiveness of those actions. The success of implementing the desert tortoise revised Recovery Plan will rely heavily upon the involvement of our partners and a commitment to implementing the strategic elements listed above, coupled with a functioning adaptive management program.

Service Participates In 2011 Beatty Days Celebration



Michael Burroughs (top right) and James Harter (top) work with local children at Beatty Days. Amargosa toad (right).

By Dan Balduini, Public Affairs Officer

Biologists with the Service joined staff from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and members of the Beatty Habitat Committee to provide information and educational activities during the 2011 Beatty Days Celebration. This was the third year the Service has had a presence at the weekend gathering — an annual celebration of the small Nevada town’s 107-year history and heritage.

The annual Beatty Days Celebration features everything from gun fights and bed races to a chili cook-off and antique car show. The three-day event also offers food, live entertainment, vendors and exhibitors, a poker run, eating and

belching contests, and a 5K run.

The town of between 1,000 and 1,200 residents sits at the southern gateway to Death Valley, approximately 115 miles northwest of Las Vegas on US Highway 95. The town swells to some 6,000 during Beatty Days, with visitors from all over the world.

The main attraction at the Service and NDOW table was a display with live Amargosa toads (*Anaxyrus nelsoni*). Visitors to the table had the opportunity to learn about the species, with hands-on activities designed for children. The youngsters got a first-hand look at

the toads in their terrarium, and learned how biologists track the progress and movement of the toads with tiny glass-encased tags inserted beneath the skin on their backs. Participants used a reader to record the tag number inside an artificial toad, measured the plastic amphibian, and recorded the information in a log book. The Amargosa toad “tattoos” were by far the biggest hit among the younger set.



The table featured other educational items including pelts and horns from five mammals native to Nevada — Desert bighorn sheep, mountain lion, coyote, fox, and rabbit. The items were available to be touched while biologists talked and answered questions about the various species. The kids also had the opportunity to make animal tracks in sand using casts of their paws and hooves.

In a short day-and-a-half, 239 people visited the table, including 103 children.

Amargosa Toad



Adult Amargosa Toad (left) Amargosa toad egg mass (center) and tadpoles in restored habitat (right).

Photos: Michael Burroughs and Christiana Manville and /USFWS



The Amargosa toad is a member of the family Bufonidae, which includes North American true toads. The species is endemic (found nowhere else) to Oasis Valley in southern Nye County, Nevada. The historical and current range of the Amargosa toad is estimated to occur along an approximately 10-mile stretch of the Amargosa River and nearby spring systems, roughly between the towns of Springdale and Beatty. The amount of known and potential Amargosa toad habitat is estimated at about 8,440 acres on both public and private lands.

The dorsal (upper) body of the Amargosa toad has three paired rows of wart-like skin projections called tubercles. Their backs have black speckling or asymmetrical spots. Background coloration ranges from almost black to brownish or pale yellow-brown or olive and may vary considerably among individual toads in the same population. A light mid-dorsal stripe occurs along the backbone. The large, wart-like parotid glands located behind the

eye are tawny to olive. Underneath, the Amargosa toad is whitish or pale olive with scattered black spots that merge above the legs to form the appearance of "pants."

The breeding season for the Amargosa toad begins in mid-February when egg clutches are laid. A female may lay up to 6,000 eggs in a single clutch, which appears as a long strand of black dots intertwined among vegetation along the edges of a slow-moving stream or shallow body of water. Toads require relatively open water that persists long enough for the tadpoles to metamorphose into toadlets and leave the water. Breeding activity tapers off in the summer and ends in July. The eggs typically develop into tadpoles within a week, and tadpoles into toadlets in about four weeks.

Adult toads forage at night along the water's edge and adjacent upland areas. Toads eat invertebrates including spiders, insects, and scorpions. During the day, Amargosa toads typically take shelter in burrows, debris piles, or dense vegetation.

The Service completed a 12-month review of the toad's status in July 2010 and determined the species did not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. The Service was able to reach this determination because of the coordinated conservation work by the local community, and agency partners. Their conservation efforts are a wonderful example of how a community working together prevented the need to list a species.

Nevada's Listing Program Work Plan



In an effort to improve implementation of the ESA, the Service will systematically review and address the needs of more than 250 candidate species over the next six years. The Service will review species included on the 2010 Candidate Notice of Review to determine if they should be added to the federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

A multi-year listing work plan, first developed through an agreement with the plaintiff group WildEarth Guardians, was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in May 2011. In July 2011, the Service reached an agreement with the plaintiff group Center for Biological Diversity that reinforced the May multi-year work plan. These historic agreements were approved by Judge Emmet Sullivan on September 9, 2011.

The multi-year listing work plan will allow the Service to make administration of the ESA more effective and efficient by enabling the Service to again prioritize its workload based on the needs of candidate species. This multi-year listing plan will also provide state wildlife agencies, stakeholders,

and other partners clarity and certainty about when listing determinations will be made.

Candidate species and the listing process

Candidate species are plants and animals for which the Service has sufficient information on their biological status and threats to propose them as endangered or threatened under the ESA. However, development of a proposed listing rule is precluded by other higher priority listing activities. This determination places the species on the candidate list.

Candidate species are assigned a listing priority from 1 to 12 based on the magnitude of threats they face, the immediacy of the threats, and their taxonomic uniqueness (for example, full species have higher priority than subspecies). The species' listing priority dictates the relative order in which proposed listing rules are prepared, with the species at greatest risk (listing priority 1 through 3) being proposed first.

For a variety of reasons, the Service has not been able to list species and designate critical habitat at the same rate that new species are added to the candidate list. As a result, the 2010 Candidate Notice of Review identified 251 species that warrant a listing proposal, but are not yet fully protected by the ESA.

Before a plant or animal species can receive the protection provided by the ESA, it must first be added to

the federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. In the final rulemaking, the Service analyzes information received in public comments and testimony. Within one year of a listing proposal, the Service may:

- 1) publish a final listing rule as originally proposed or later revised because the best available biological data support it;
- 2) withdraw the proposal because the biological information does not support the listing; or
- 3) extend the proposal if there is substantial disagreement within the scientific community concerning the biological appropriateness of the listing. After a six-month extension, the Service is required to make a decision on the basis of the best scientific information available.

A final listing rule generally becomes effective 30 days after publication in the Federal Register.

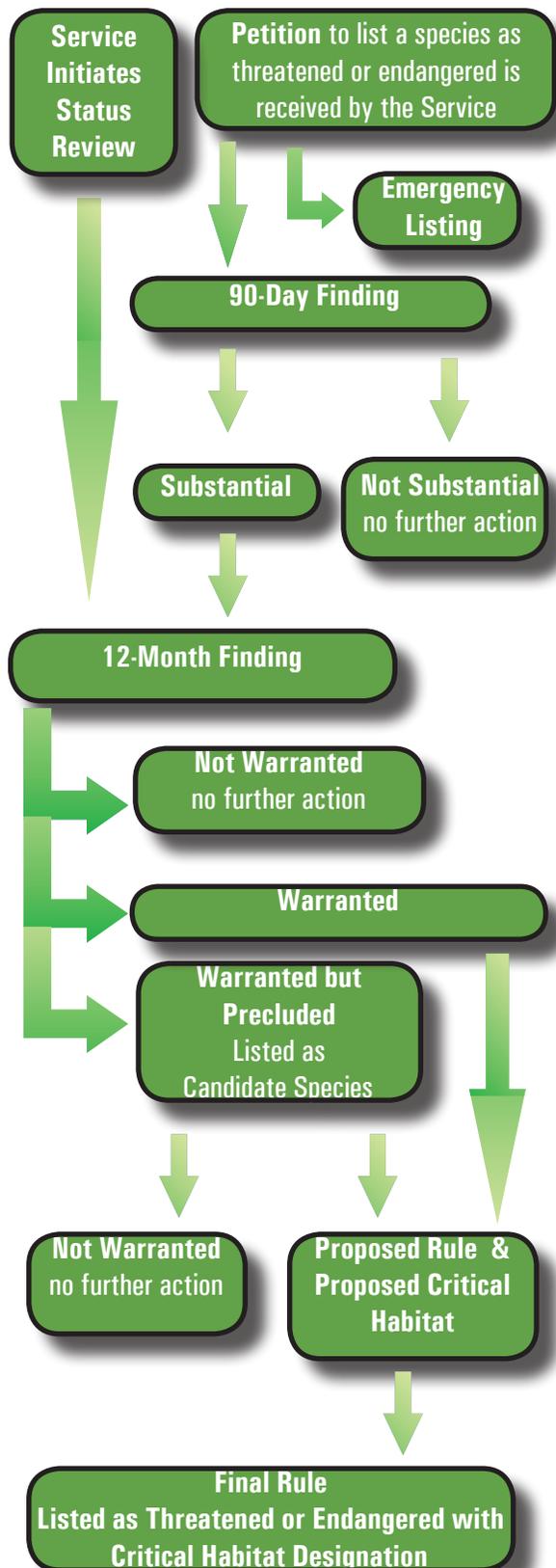
Information on listing actions completed in Nevada in FY 2011 as well as Nevada's listing work plan is detailed on the following page. The Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office will actively engage conservation partners and the public to look for improved ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

**Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office
Listing Actions & Work Plan**

| Completed 90-Day Findings | Decision |
|--|------------------------------|
| Spring Mountains acastus butterfly | Substantial |
| 10 subspecies of Great Basin butterflies | Substantial for 4 subspecies |
| 6 species of sand dune beetles | Substantial for 4 species |
| 42 species of Great Basin springsnails | Substantial for 32 species |
| Completed 12-Month Findings | Decision |
| Mt. Charleston blue butterfly | Warranted but precluded |
| Whitebark pine | Warranted but precluded |
| Northern leopard frog | Not warranted |
| Northern leatherside chub | Not warranted |
| Pending 90-Day Findings | Planned Publication |
| American black bear in Nevada | FY 2012 |
| Pending 12-Month Findings | Planned Publication |
| Spring Mountains acastus butterfly | FY 2012 |
| 4 subspecies of Great Basin butterflies | FY 2012 |
| 4 species of sand dune beetles | FY 2012 |
| 32 species of Great Basin springsnails | TBD |
| Pending Proposed Rule & Proposed Critical Habitat or Not Warranted Finding | Planned Publication |
| Mt. Charleston blue butterfly | FY 2012 |
| Bi-State greater sage-grouse DPS | FY 2013 |
| 2 Sierra plants and 1 springsnail: Webber ivesia, Soldier Meadows cinquefoil, elongate Mud Meadows springsnail | TBD |
| Las Vegas & Churchill Narrows buckwheat | TBD |
| Tahoe yellow cress | FY 2016 |
| Columbia spotted frog | TBD |
| Relict leopard frog | FY 2016 |
| **Yosemite toad & Mt. yellow legged frog | FY 2013 |
| **Yellow-billed cuckoo | FY 2013 |
| **Goose Creek milkvetch | FY 2013 |
| **Greater sage-grouse | FY 2015 |
| **Whitebark pine | TBD |

**Even though these species occur within the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office's jurisdiction, the ESA lead for these species is a different Service Office or Region. The Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office will assist those offices in the preparation of the Proposed Rule and Proposed Critical Habitat or Not Warranted Finding.

Listing Process





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A Message From The State Supervisor

I'm excited to be here in Nevada! My wife and I moved here after raising our two children in Idaho for 23 years. We're ready for a change personally and professionally, and Nevada is a great place to experience that change.

In my short time here in Nevada I have had the opportunity to see different parts of the state, both north and south. The state is even more beautiful than I remembered and the opportunities for species conservation are great, from desert fishes to rare insects and plants, reptiles and amphibians. I understand that well over 300 species and subspecies are found in our state and nowhere else on earth!

Best of all, I've had a chance to meet a lot of interesting and wonderful people, all of whom make fish and wildlife and habitat conservation their priority. It is inspiring to see so much support for conserving natural resources for future generations. With support from very capable staff here at the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office I will do my best to make a contribution in a way that complements others.

You can help me: If I've not already met you, please reach out to me, introduce yourself and let me know how the Service can help you. The Service's mission is, "Working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people." You can see that our mission features the role of others in achieving conservation, so by meeting you we can best fulfill the Service's mission. I hope you will invite us to have that chance.

Sincerely,

Edward D. Koch