

# News Release



## Southern Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Critical Habitat Designated for Endangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly

**LAS VEGAS** — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has designated approximately 5,214 acres in southern Nevada’s Spring Mountains as critical habitat for the endangered Mount Charleston blue butterfly. The butterfly was listed as endangered in October 2013, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The final critical habitat rule will appear in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2015. The rule becomes effective on July 30, 2015. The land comprising the critical habitat is 99 percent federally owned and mostly within designated wilderness.

“Critical habitat” is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas of particular importance to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species. The ESA defines “conservation” as the actions leading towards the eventual recovery of a species to the point where it is no longer threatened or endangered.

The Mount Charleston blue butterfly (*Icaricia (Plebejus) shasta charlestonensis*) is a distinct subspecies of the wider-ranging Shasta blue butterfly. The butterfly occupies high elevations in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, approximately 25 miles west of Las Vegas.

The Mount Charleston blue butterfly was given ESA protection due to the threat posed by the loss and degradation of its habitat. The species is likely to experience continued habitat loss due to changes in natural fire regimes and succession, fuels reduction projects, and the implementation of recreational development projects. Additionally, climate change and invasive nonnative plants will increase the inherent risk of extinction for the Mount Charleston blue butterfly.

The acreage designated as critical habitat for the butterfly contains host and nectar plants, as well as open areas essential to the conservation of the species. Plants upon which the Mount Charleston blue butterfly depends are Torrey’s milkvetch (*Astragalus calycosus* var. *calycosus*), mountain oxytrope (*Oxytropis oreophila* var. *oreophila*), and broad keeled milkvetch (*Astragalus platytropis*).

**(More)**

The Service worked proactively with the U.S. Forest Service during the process to identify and remove certain areas from the designated critical habitat to minimize future management conflicts while protecting vital habitat for the butterfly. The removed locations include several day use areas, camp grounds, and the Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort. These areas have high concentrations of infrastructure, experience heavy recreation use or management activities, or lack functional habitat.

Copies of the critical habitat rule and the rule protecting the Mount Charleston blue butterfly as endangered are available on the Internet at [www.fws.gov/nevada/](http://www.fws.gov/nevada/), [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) (FWS–R8–ES–2013–0105), or through the Southern Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office at 702-515-5230.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America’s native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others. Our priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. We seek to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species.

*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. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/cno>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).*