

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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GIANT PUERTO RICO LIZARD LISTED AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

The giant anole (Anolis roosevelti), a large 24-inch lizard of Puerto Rico, has been determined to be an endangered species by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The rulemaking, published July 18, 1977, in the Federal Register also listed a portion of Culebra Island near the Puerto Rico mainland as critical habitat for this rare species.

The giant anole may survive only in the high tree canopy of the forested slopes of Mt. Resaca on Culebra Island. The fan-leaved palm, tallest tree in the forest, and indeed the semi-moist forest in general, is quickly disappearing because of man's activities. Unless the remaining habitat on Mt. Resaca is protected, this lizard could become extinct, according to Fish and Wildlife Service biologists.

This lizard is very rare; few specimens occur in the museums of the world. Some doubt has already been expressed as to whether this species still survives. However, herpetologists most familiar with Caribbean species believe that it still exists in small numbers on Culebra. It is hoped that this action will stimulate exploratory and conservation activities for this unique lizard.

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