

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release August 17, 1977

Levitt 202/343-5634

CRITICAL HABITAT FOR SIX ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTED

The living space that is critical to the survival of six U.S. endangered species has been determined by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

The determination, published in the August 11, 1977, Federal Register, lists the critical habitat of the American peregrine falcon, Florida Everglade kite, dusky seaside sparrow, Cape Sable sparrow, palila, and Morro Bay kangaroo rat. The rulemaking requires all Federal agencies to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them do not result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitats of these species.

All of the species are endangered, in whole or in part, because of the destruction of their habitat by man.

"I'd like to emphasize," Schreiner said, "that the mere designation of critical habitat does not mean that any specific project must stop. It is merely a designation of the living space necessary for the species' continued existence, and aids Federal agencies in knowing where such habitat is located so they can plan accordingly.

"There is no list of do's or don'ts in a critical habitat area. Each individual action that may be of concern will be evaluated on its own with respect to the impact it has on a species. The vast majority of conflicts

(over)

between endangered species and proposed projects have been resolved through negotiation and compromise. Generally the solution has been to modify the project--by shifting the path of a road for example, or by cutting down less timber, to spare the habitat of an endangered population."

With respect to some of the species covered by this rulemaking, potential situations of this kind are foreseen. For example, a designation of a portion of critical habitat for the American peregrine falcon could have a bearing on geothermal developments in California. Such a designation for the dusky seaside sparrow could also have a bearing on evaluation of a road proposed to be constructed by Brevard County, Florida, through the St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge.

"We believe that during the consultation period we can work out any potential conflicts to the satisfaction of most of those involved," Schreiner said. "In the 3 years since passage of the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service has had 124 documented consultations and another estimated 4,500 informal consultations with other Federal agencies to iron out problems. In only three instances have the conflicts been resolved through court action."

Schreiner pointed out that the President in his Environmental Message had ordered identified all critical habitat under Federal jurisdiction or control, and this would help avoid conflicts such as the current situation involving the endangered snail darter and Tellico Dam in Tennessee.

X X X