



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Alan Levitt 202/343-5634

TECOPA PUPFISH DECLARED EXTINCT--REMOVED FROM ENDANGERED LIST

The Tecopa pupfish has become the first species to be removed from the endangered list because it is extinct. The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made the announcement after no Tecopa pupfish were found in spite of extensive searches by Federal, State, and university biologists in more than 40 localities near Tecopa, California, where the fish could possibly have existed.

The unique desert fish, native to California's Death Valley system, was known to have lived in only two outflow springs of the Amaragosa River system. It is thought to have disappeared because of alteration of its habitat and possibly also as a result of the introduction of competing, non-native fish. One of 12 kinds of pupfishes in the U.S., the 1-1/2-inch Tecopa could tolerate highly saline waters and temperatures up to 110 degrees. In 1965, the two hot spring outflows were rechanneled and combined during construction of bathhouses, resulting in a swifter channel which carried even hotter water farther downstream, a situation for which the pupfish was not adapted.

Virtually eliminated by 1969, the Tecopa pupfish was added to the endangered species list in 1970. By 1972, it was known to be gone from this locality, although survival of the related Amaragosa River pupfish in nearby pools and springs indicated that the Tecopa might continue to exist elsewhere in the river system.

(over)

In 1978, the Fish and Wildlife Service proposed the Tecopa pupfish for removal from the list because it was believed to be extinct; removal has been delayed until additional surveys could be completed.

"It is always sad when a species becomes extinct because of human activities," noted Robert A. Jantzen, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "But the Tecopa pupfish was possibly already extinct when the first recovery efforts were made under the endangered species laws. In this instance, the fact that this fish has become extinct should not be taken to mean that endangered species conservation measures have failed. On the contrary, recovery actions have benefited a great number of endangered species, such as the American alligator, peregrine falcon, whooping crane, and brown pelican."

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