

# News Bulletin

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Pacific Islands Fish & Wildlife Office

300 Ala Moana Blvd., Rm 3-122, Honolulu, HI 96734

Phone: 808-792-9400

<http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>



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Contact: Paul Brown, [Dillon.Brown@fws.gov](mailto:Dillon.Brown@fws.gov), (808) 792-9535

## For the First Time Ever, Species in American Samoa Protected Under Endangered Species Act

HONOLULU, Hawaii –The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that five animal species from American Samoa warrant listing as federally endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This final listing, which includes the Pacific sheath-tailed bat, mao, American Samoa population of the friendly ground-dove, and two land snails, marks the first time ESA protections have been applied to species on the territory, which covers seven islands and atolls in the South Pacific. Listing these five animals will help focus additional resources, conservation efforts and attention on addressing primary threats to the species, and in some cases, to returning them to places where they have been lost in the wild.

The Pacific sheath-tailed bat occurs in American Samoa, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and Vanuatu; the mao (a forest bird) formerly occurred in American Samoa and Samoa but is now likely extirpated from American Samoa. Under this final rule, both species are now listed throughout their ranges. The friendly ground-dove also occurs in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa, but the Service is listing only the population that occurs in American Samoa as a distinct population segment. Both land snails are endemic to American Samoa meaning they occur nowhere else on Earth.

These animals are threatened by habitat loss and degradation from deforestation and the effects of non-native feral ungulates, such as introduced pigs, and predation by non-native species, such as cats, rats and predatory snails. The few populations and low numbers of individuals also leave these populations vulnerable to severe storms and human disturbance.

“The people of American Samoa have a rich cultural history of stewardship of their native fish and wildlife,” said Mary Abrams, Field Supervisor for the Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “The listing of these five species under the ESA will assist us in continuing to work with the local leaders, our partners, and the people of American Samoa to recover these species so future generations of American Samoans can also enjoy what makes these islands so unique and special.”

This final listing is based on the best scientific information available, and addresses peer reviewer and public comments, including comments received from the public during meetings held in American Samoa.

For more information on these species and the final listing, visit <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>.

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