

Peer Review Plan for the Toothless Blindcat (*Trogloglanis pattersoni*) and Widemouth Blindcat (*Satan eurystomus*) Species Status Assessment Report

About the Document

Title: Species Status Assessment Report for the Toothless Blindcat (*Trogloglanis pattersoni*) and Widemouth Blindcat (*Satan eurystomus*)

Purpose: The Species Status Assessment (SSA) report will inform the determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) whether the toothless blindcat (*Trogloglanis pattersoni*) and widemouth blindcat (*Satan eurystomus*) warrant listing as threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The information in the SSA report is likely to be influential scientific information. This updated version of the SSA report includes new information that has been provided since the initial proposed listing of these two species as endangered (on August 22, 2023; 88 FR 57046) and will be used to inform any final listing decision.

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Timing of Peer Review: April 2025 – May 2025

Type of Peer Review: The Service will solicit comments on the draft report from independent scientific reviewers via individual letters. Peer reviewers will submit comments in written form.

Anticipated Number of Reviewers: The Service will request review from at least three individuals.

Reviewer Selection Method: A Service office not associated with development of the SSA report will select peer reviewers and coordinate the process. In selecting peer reviewers, we will consider four key factors: expertise, balance, independence, and avoidance of conflict of interest. We are not seeking nominations for peer reviewers from the public.

Necessary Expertise: Peer reviewers will have expertise on the toothless blindcat, the widemouth blindcat, or related taxa; the ecosystems in which the species lives; the threats to or management of the species or its habitat; or the analytical methods we used.

Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the listing determination or any other associated rulemaking under the Act. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document.

About public participation

We anticipate publishing our decision whether to list the species in the Federal Register. Upon publication, we will make the peer review comments on the draft SSA report publicly available. Based on the information in this SSA (including the new information we have received since the proposed listing) and following consideration of all comments received from the public and peer reviewers, we may continue to conclude that both species are endangered, or we may conclude that one or both of these species is threatened instead of endangered, or we may conclude that one or both of these species does not warrant listing as either an endangered species or a threatened species. In our final rule, we will clearly explain our rationale and the basis for our final decisions, including why we made changes, if any, that differ from this proposal. If appropriate, the Service will implement an outreach plan to provide opportunity for public involvement in the review process.

This peer review plan is made available to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. The public is invited to submit comments on this peer review plan by contacting the agency person listed below.

Contact

Karen Myers, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, at karen_myers@fws.gov.

Also, for more information on the toothless and widemouth blindcats see:

<https://www.fws.gov/species/toothless-blindcat-trogloglanis-pattersoni>

<https://www.fws.gov/species/widemouth-blindcat-satan-eurystomus>