

ESA Success: 249 Wildlife Wins and Counting

A joint effort of conservation action and recovery across the Southeast Region

Focused Conservation

Diversity in Partnerships to Sustain Wildlife Diversity

Keeping Working Lands Working



Georgia asters do not need federal protection, credit USFWS/Michele Elmore



Louisiana black bears were delisted due to recovery, credit USDA/Clint Turnage

The Challenge

More than three petitions beginning in 2010 brought attention to the conservation crisis centered in the Southeast. Just under 500 species were called out for evaluation on whether protection was warranted under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This triggered a call to action, not just to address the incredible workload but also to find better solutions for conserving, recovering, and sustaining wildlife and its habitat in the southeast. We needed a better strategy, even if petitioners continued to file, continued declines in species were not acceptable.

As of 2021, the Service's Southeast Region has roughly 50 percent of the agency-wide workload to evaluate these species.

Conservation Action

Recognizing the need to use innovation to reverse this crisis, the Region began working even more closely with the States and Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, private landowners and a host of other partners including Department of Defense, National Forests, Non-government Organizations, and others to look for opportunities to partner in conservation. It was imperative that we not only continue to recover species already protected by the ESA but also find opportunities to conserve species so that listing is not necessary. Together we have used a variety of tools, demonstrating the flexibility of the ESA and the strength/power of working together to recover and sustain species in the southeast.

Results

Working with a diversity of partners achieves conservation sustaining species and their habitats. Together, we have been more successful gathering data and learning about species conservation needs, and developing strategies to keep them from declining or moving them towards recovery.

For at-risk species, voluntary conservation efforts before species need protection is avoiding the need to list and regulate species under the ESA. These efforts benefit people, species, and their habitats alike and provides benefits for other species on the landscape.

For listed species, continuing to work with our diverse group of partners helps us identify innovative ways to work together to sustain the rare species on the landscape, and even bring some back from the brink of extinction.

So far, the effort and the vision of people working together has enabled the Service to determine 249 southeastern species either didn't need the ESA's protection, or could be downlisted or removed from the list altogether.





Red-cockaded woodpecker, credit USFWS



Juvenile gopher tortoise, credit Mississippi Army National Guard/Chris Potin



Yadkin goldenrod, credit Arleigh Birchler



Okaloosa darter, credit USFWS

The Success Since 2011: 249 in good shape or doing better

126	species withdrawn by petitioner
27	not substantial 90-day find
69	not warranted 12-month findings and candidate removal
222 total	species do not require protection as a result of conservation actions, updated surveys and reevaluations of threats to their survival, or lack of substantial information

11	species downlisted as a result of recovery actions
16	species delisted entirely as a result of recovery actions
27 total	species require less protection or are recovered and no longer need protection at all

www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation

September 22, 2022