

## NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Mountain-Prairie Region  
134 Union Boulevard  
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### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Will Not Consider Listing the Black Hills Population of American Dipper**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that a petition seeking Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection for the American dipper population in the Black Hills of South Dakota does not provide substantial information to indicate that protection may be warranted. Although no further action will result from this finding, the Service will continue to monitor the status of the dipper in that region. The petition finding will be published tomorrow in the *Federal Register* and is available online today thru the *Federal Register* web site.

The American dipper is a small, gray passerine bird that inhabits western Canada, Mexico and the western United States, including the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The Service made the determination in response to a petition submitted by the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, Center for Native Ecosystems, Native Ecosystems Council and Prairie Hills Audubon Society requesting the Service emergency list the American dipper in the Black Hills as a distinct population segment under the ESA.

The Service has determined that the American dipper in the Black Hills does not constitute a distinct population segment as defined by the ESA and is therefore not a listable entity.

A distinct population segment of a vertebrate species can be treated as a species for purposes of listing if that population segment satisfies specific standards set by the Service's regulations. The standards require it to be discrete from the remainder of the population and significant to the species to which it belongs.

Although the population is considered discrete because it is isolated from other populations of American dipper, the information in the petition and Service files does not indicate that the Black Hills population is biologically or ecologically significant. Consideration for a population's significance includes, among other criteria, its persistence in an unusual or unique ecological setting. The cold, fast moving mountain stream habitat that the dipper needs is not unique to the Black Hills and can be found throughout the western half of North America, including in the Rocky Mountains, where

the species is relatively abundant. However, if new, substantial information becomes available, the Service will reevaluate this finding.

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department continues to monitor the American dipper in the Black Hills. It was listed in 1996 as a threatened species in the State of South Dakota. The dipper is also federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treat Act.

The American dipper has a strong, stout bill, which enables the bird to probe and forage for aquatic insects among rocks. The gray bird has rather large feet with strong toes and claws that enable the bird to grip rocks and pebbles on streambeds. The dipper's dense plumage insulates it from low air and water temperatures and has helped the species adapt to living in cold streams and creeks. This special plumage also helps with evaporative cooling in hot weather.

The ESA provides for citizens and organizations to petition the Service to add to or remove species from the lists of threatened and endangered wildlife and plants. The Service is required to make a 90-day finding on whether the petition presents substantial information that the petitioned action may be warranted.

The petition finding was published today in the *Federal Register*.

For more information about this finding, please visit the Service's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/bhdipper/> or contact the Fish and Wildlife Service's South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office at 605-224-8693.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).