



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces 2013 Endangered Species Recovery Champion Awards**

The conservation and recovery of endangered species is one of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) most important missions. Each year, the Service recognizes individuals and teams that have made a particularly significant contribution to this critical endeavor. This year the Service has recognized three individuals and teams from the southwest for their exceptional efforts to conserve and protect the nation's rarest fish, wildlife and plants by designating them 2013 *Recovery Champions*.

James Atkinson, Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Team Leader, and Christa Weise, Ph.D., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for their work in conserving the Sonoran pronghorn. As the Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Team Leader for the past six years, Jim Atkinson has focused efforts leading to the establishment of a second captive breeding facility and a new population of pronghorn in an area of its historic range in the King Valley of Kofa Valley National Wildlife Refuge for the first time in a century. Dr. Christa Weise has also played a key role in conserving the Sonoran pronghorn. In Mexico, Dr. Weise has participated in Sonoran pronghorn surveys, and at home she has worked with partners to address malfunctioning radio telemetry collars, bobcat predation of fawns, and irrigation canals as drowning threats. Partners include the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Barry M. Goldwater Marine Corps Range, U.S. Air Force, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Yuma Rod and Gun Club, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, and non-profit organizations.

Donna J. Shaver, Ph.D., who works for the National Park Service at the Padre Island National Seashore, Corpus Christi, Texas, coordinates research and recovery activities for the endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle with partners in the United States and Mexico, including the Service, NOAA Fisheries, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, local governments, universities and NGOs. Dr. Shaver has devoted her career to this species, earning global recognition for her scholarship and its applications—identifying critical foraging areas, conducting surveys and monitoring, and recovering and rehabilitating stranded sea turtles. She has authored or co-authored over 100 publications and published in a variety of journals and magazines. Dr. Shaver is also a member of

the bi-national Kemp's ridley recovery team, a board member of the International Sea Turtle Society, a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Marine Turtle Specialist Group, and the division chief for Padre Island National Seashore, Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery.

"We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to these dedicated conservationists who are on the front lines fighting the battle against extinction," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "Their spirit and determination is the application of Aldo Leopold's counsel to 'keep every cog and wheel,' and they provide hope for all of us that our children and the generations that follow will be able to enjoy the same tremendous diversity of plants and animals that we do today."

"The dedication and accomplishments of these individuals and their partners is an inspiration to us all," said Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region. "Their contributions to the Southwest Region's Endangered Species Recovery Program are truly deserving of this prestigious award, and of our lasting gratitude."

The *Recovery Champion* awards began in 2002 as a one-time recognition for Service staff members for their achievements in conserving listed species. However, in 2007, the program was expanded to honor Service partners as well, recognizing their essential role in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

For information about the 2013 Recovery Champions, please visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/angered/what-we-do/recovery-champions/index.html>.

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels:*



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