



News Release

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SERVICE DETERMINES THAT THE WARTON'S CAVE MESHWEAVER DOES NOT WARRANT PROTECTION UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today it has completed a status review of the Warton's cave meshweaver (*Cicurina wartoni*) and concluded that it does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service made this finding based on scientific information and review that indicates that Warton's cave meshweaver is not a distinct species and therefore not a listable entity under the ESA.

Warton's cave meshweaver is an eyeless, cave-endemic spider known only from a single geographic location, a privately-owned, shallow cave known as Pickle Pit, in Travis County, Texas. The Service identified *Cicurina wartoni* as a candidate for listing in the November 15, 1994, Animal Candidate Review for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species. On May 11, 2004, we received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity requesting that *Cicurina wartoni* be listed as endangered or threatened, and that critical habitat be designated under the ESA. The Service published a positive 90-day finding in 2005; however, additional action was precluded by higher listing priorities.

The species was first collected from Pickle Pit in 1990 by James Reddell, Marcelino Reyes, and Lee Sherrod and described by Gertsch (1992, p. 101). Additional *Cicurina* specimens were collected from Pickle Pit in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Dr. Marshal Hedin conducted rigorous analysis, including genetic testing, of these specimens and then with specimens from 27 regional caves. Hedin's report indicated that *Cicurina wartoni* was not a distinct species; and recommended *C. wartoni*, *C. trivisa*, and *C. reddelli* be treated as a single species until formal taxonomic changes can be published. The Service requested peer review of Hedin's 2014 report. The peer reviewers supported Hedin's conclusion that *Cicurina wartoni* was not a distinct species. In addition, the Service's Conservation Genetics Laboratory reviewed the information and supported Hedin's conclusion.

A copy of the 12-month finding and other information about the Warton's cave meshweaver is available at <http://www.regulations.gov> at Docket Number FWS-R2-ES-2014-0026. Supporting documentation used in preparing this finding is available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite #200, Austin, TX 78758.

Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite #200, Austin, TX 78758. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), please call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

The Service's priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. The agency seeks to address the conservation needs of imperiled species before they require the protection of the Act, while accelerating recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species.

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, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



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