

SAN XAVIER TALUSSNAIL
(*Sonorella eremita*)

STATUS: Species protected under a Conservation Agreement.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The San Xavier talussnail is a desert snail. The talussnail is less than 25 mm (1 in) in diameter, has a round shell with as many as 4.5 whorls, a white to pinkish tint and a chestnut-brown shoulder band. The talussnail is hermaphroditic. The species requires three or four years to mature, depending on rainfall frequency, and has a reproductive life of four to six years, depending on the number of days it remains active. The talussnail is known to estivate for up to three years and in most years is only active for three or four days.

HABITAT: The San Xavier Talussnail lives in a deep, northwestward facing, limestone rockslide in Pima County, Arizona. Its habitat is protected from drying effects of the sun by outcrops of limestone and decomposed granite to the northeast and southwest, and by the hill itself to the southeast. The vegetation, slope of the hillside, and depth of the slide provide necessary moisture conditions. The elevation of this habitat ranges from 1,173 to 1,194 m (3,850 to 3,920 ft).

RANGE: Historic: Unknown but probably similar to the current distribution.

Current: Surveys indicate the talussnail occurs in an area of approximately 15 by 30 m (50 by 100 ft) on lands owned by the El Paso Natural Gas Company, on a single hill of Mineral Hills in Pima County, Arizona.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Potential threats include urban development, vandalism, and road construction or maintenance. The talussnail's restricted location makes it vulnerable to extinction from a single catastrophic event.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: The land is entirely owned by El Paso Natural Gas Company. Arizona Electric Power Cooperative has been granted a perpetual easement for the microwave facility site on the hill-top and has assumed responsibility for maintaining the access road to the hill-top.

NOTES: A Conservation Agreement for the San Xavier Talussnail was implemented between El Paso Natural Gas Company, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., Arizona Game and Fish Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Conservation Agreement is posted on the internet at: <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/Documents/ConservationAgreements/SanXavierTalussnail1998.pdf> The purpose of the Agreement was to reduce threats to the species and maintain the habitat. On October 6, 1998, FWS withdrew a proposal to list the San Xavier talussnail as an endangered species (63 FR 53620, 1998) due to the reduced level of threats present to the species brought about from the conservation agreement.

The State of Arizona has placed the San Xavier talussnail on the 2001 Crustaceans and Mollusks Commission Order 42 and the list of sensitive elements that qualify for Heritage funding. This designation makes it illegal to collect or possess the species.