

# Proposed Rule to Revise and Designate Critical Habitat for Nine Bexar County Invertebrates

## About the Document

**Title:** Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for *Rhadine exilis*, *Rhadine infernalis*, Helotes Mold Beetle, Cokendolpher Cave Harvestman, Robber Baron Cave Meshweaver, Madla Cave Meshweaver, Braken Bat Cave Meshweaver, Government Canyon Bat Cave Meshweaver, and Government Canyon Bat Cave Spider

**Purpose:** The proposed rule describes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) proposal to revise critical habitat designation for the *Rhadine exilis* (ground beetle, no common name); *Rhadine infernalis* (ground beetle, no common name); Helotes mold beetle (*Batrisodes venyivi*); Cokendolpher Cave harvestman (*Texella cokendolpheri*); Robber Baron Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina baronia*); Madla Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina madla*); and Braken Bat Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina venii*) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The Service is also proposing to designate critical habitat for the Government Canyon Bat Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina vespera*) and Government Canyon Bat Cave spider (*Neoleptoneta microps*). These species are collectively known as the nine Bexar County invertebrates. In total, the Service is proposing approximately 6,906 acres (ac) (2,795 hectares (ha)) as critical habitat for these invertebrates in Bexar County, Texas.

## About the Peer Review Process

**Type of Review:** Influential

**Estimated Peer Review Timeline:** February to April, 2011

### **Peer review process:**

- The Service will solicit comments from three or more independent peer reviewers with expertise in karst invertebrate ecology. This scientific peer review will be held concurrently with the public review.
- Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the designation of critical habitat. Peer reviewers may be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitation of the scientific data used in the document.
- Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Expertise: In karst, invertebrate ecology.
  - Independence: Reviewers will not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service, if the government supports their work.
  - Objectivity: Reviewers will be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. The reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and identifying their knowledge gaps.
  - Advocacy: Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of these species under the Endangered Species Act.
  - Conflict of Interest: Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair their objectivity.
- The Service will use the information received from the peer review in the final rule for revising and designating critical habitat for the nine Bexar County invertebrates.
  - The estimated start date of the peer review will be between February 8, 2011, and April 8, 2011.

### **About public participation**

The proposed critical habitat will be made available to the public through news releases, direct mailings, and will be posted on Service websites with solicitations for public comment. The Service will implement an outreach plan to provide ample opportunity for public involvement in the review process. The Service will publish a final revision and designation of critical habitat following consideration of all comments received from the public and peer reviewers. This peer review plan is made available on this website to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

Contact: Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, Austin, Texas at Adam\_Zerrenner@fws.gov or 512-490-0057.