

New Mexico Chapter of
The Wildlife Society



Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weeks of Friday, November 15th through December 13th 2013

Check out the chapter on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wildlife-Society-New-Mexico-Chapter/122478411098284>

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##

**1. AZ/NM AFS/TWS Joint Annual Meeting -
Second Call for Papers – Abstracts due
December 20th, 2013**

**The Arizona/New Mexico Chapters of the American Fisheries Society and
the Wildlife Society Announce:**

A joint annual meeting to be held at the:

Hon-dah Resort – Casino and Conference Center in Pinetop, AZ

www.hon-dah.com

Thursday – Saturday, February 6-8, 2014

REGISTRATION INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

<http://www.aznmfishsoup.org/>

SECOND CALL FOR PAPERS

We are now accepting abstracts, SECOND CALL to be submitted by December 20th, 2013.

The Program Committee for the 2014 JAM invites abstracts for contributed oral presentations and posters. The program will include a plenary session, contributed papers and a poster session on fisheries and wildlife related topics. We expect a wide range of topics from the diverse fishery and wildlife resources found within Arizona and New Mexico. Presentations may include completed projects and works in progress.

We urge students to attend and are particularly interested in student presentations. Several awards will be given for “best papers”. The AZ/NM Chapter of the American Fisheries Society will present a “Best Student Paper” and “Best Student Poster” award for graduate and undergraduate students presenting papers/posters in the fisheries field. The AZ and NM Chapters of The Wildlife Society will present a “Best Student Paper” and “Best Student Poster” award for graduate and undergraduate students presenting papers/posters in the wildlife field.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ORAL PRESENTATION AND POSTER ABSTRACTS

Speakers should plan for a 15-minute presentation with an additional 5-minute period for questions and answers. A laptop PC and digital projector will be provided for Power Point presentations. Please inquire about other audio-visual aids.

Oral presentation and poster abstract format:

List all authors using first and last names, their affiliation, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. When choosing the title, be brief but descriptive and avoid using acronyms or scientific names in the title unless the common name is not widely known. Please indicate if you are a student (undergraduate or graduate) at the end of the abstract (see example below). Abstracts are restricted to 150 words and should summarize the findings. *Please follow the format from the example below so that program chairs can focus on processing abstracts rather than making edits.*

Poster Size and Display:

Please limit your poster size to 32"x 44" which can be either portrait or landscape; each presenter will have a 4x4 foot space for their poster, which will provide a place to hang the poster and other information such as handouts and category headings. Presenters are required to assemble and disassemble their own poster; you will be advised when to do so. You must provide tacks, push pins, or t-pins.

Poster Presenters should plan on attending the Poster Session at the meeting to be available to answer questions. Breaks and socials will be organized around the Posters to encourage discussion between attendees and poster presenters.

All presenters will receive an e-mail confirmation of their abstract submission within one week post-submittal, abstract acceptance within two weeks of submission, and notification of the time and place of their presentation or poster session in January.

Please email your abstracts to the appropriate Program Chair below by December 20th, 2013:

Oral presentations for fisheries: Mike Pillow, Michael.Pillow@fws.gov

Oral presentations for wildlife: Jon Hanna, moremuledeer@gmail.com, 480-403-1913

Poster presentations for both fisheries and wildlife: Sally Petre, SPetre@azgfd.gov, 623-236-7664

ABSTRACT EXAMPLE

Authors:

Julie Meka Carter, Native Trout Coordinator, Arizona Game and Fish Department; 5000 W. Carefree Hwy, Phoenix, Arizona 85086; Phone (623) 236-7576; jcarter@azgfd.gov

Jeremy Voeltz, Fisheries Biologist and Project Coordinator, US Fish and Wildlife Service, AZ Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, P.O. Box 39, Pinetop, Arizona 85935; Phone (928) 338-4288 x23; jeremy.voeltz@fws.gov

Title:

A 10-year Plan to Secure a Unique Southwest Native Trout, the Apache Trout

Abstract:

Apache trout recovery has been ongoing since the 1950s. Despite aggressive recovery efforts, historical and present, there are still several ways to improve the present and future sustainability success of Apache trout that go beyond actions guided by the Apache Trout Recovery Plan. Three of the most significant threats to natural and reestablished Apache trout populations that exist today are: non-native trout occupying historical Apache trout habitat, marginal habitat in small

recovery streams, and impacts of climate change on trout streams. A new Keystone Initiative grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation addresses these threats by implementing four key strategies that if achieved, could increase Apache trout abundance by an estimated 50 percent by 2017. In combination, actions guided by the Recovery Plan will result in recovery and a possible delisting proposal, and the Initiative will implement key actions that could reduce the effects of stochastic events, expand and improve habitat, and increase Apache trout abundance, ultimately ensuring their sustainability. This presentation will discuss in detail the Keystone Initiative grant for Apache trout and the progress and obstacles experienced since 2008, the first year of implementation.

**Student

For more information please visit: <http://www.aznmfishsoup.org/>

##

2.REMINDER: NM TWS Chapter Elections – Nominations Due December 20th, 2013

Chapter Elections for JAM Feb 6-8, 2014

It's time to nominate individuals for Chapter positions for 2014. Please nominate deserving NM Chapter members by December 20, including yourself. Those holding present office are encouraged also. Submit your nominations to the Chapter President Bob Osborn by email to - robert.osborn@state.nm.us or mail at Robert Osborn, Private Land Program Manager, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504.

We usually have sparse nominations so please participate.

We are electing the following positions

President Elect

Secretary

Treasurer

And 3 Board Members

Each candidate should consider providing

- a. Personal data- Full name, birthplace and date, marital status, children.
- b. Education.
- c. Employment history.
- d. Wildlife Society activities.
- e. Other professional affiliations.
- f. Why the person would be a good fit for the position.

Duties of the positions follow

President Elect shall assume the duties of the President in the absence or upon the inability of the President to serve, and shall perform any duties assigned by the President. The President Elect shall succeed as President the year following his term.

Secretary shall be responsible for the files and records of the Chapter. The duties also include the recording of the minutes of meetings, the maintenance of the membership rolls, correspondence, and the issuance of meeting minutes.

Treasurer shall be responsible for the funds of the Chapter, and shall submit complete financial reports to the last meeting of the person's term of office. Duties also shall include the receipt and disbursement of funds.

Board Members shall attend and participate in Executive Board meetings; notify the President of any items to be considered for meeting agendas; perform tasks and assume duties as directed by the President and consider being a chairperson of committees.

Please submit your nominations to Bob Osborn: robert.osborn@state.nm.us

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3. JONES-LOVICH GRANT IN SOUTHWESTERN HERPETOLOGY CALL FOR APPLICATIONS – Due January 10th, 2014

JONES-LOVICH GRANT IN SOUTHWESTERN HERPETOLOGY CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Herpetologists' League is pleased to announce a competitive grant for graduate student research for 2014. This award is named in honor of Lawrence L. C. Jones and Robert E. Lovich, editors of the 2009 book "Lizards of the American Southwest: A Photographic Field Guide." All proceeds from the book are donated to the Herpetologists' League in support of this grant.

Overview

1. An award (\$1,000) will be presented to one winner who is studying the amphibians or reptiles of the North American Southwest, including the southwestern United States or northwestern Mexico. This research can focus on any aspect of amphibian or reptile biology, including behavior, conservation, ecology, physiology, or morphology and systematics

2. See the HL website for application form, complete rules and details, along with the cover page at: <http://www.herpetologistsleague.org/en/gradres.php>
3. Entries must be received by 5 PM Pacific Time on 10 January 2014
4. Send complete application (cover page, proposal, budget, CV) as a single PDF electronically to: Carol Spencer (atrox<at>berkeley.edu). Please put "Jones-Lovich Research Grant" in the subject line.
5. One letter of support should be sent, preferably by email, directly from the supporter to Carol Spencer
6. Proposals will be reviewed by at least three professional scientists from the Jones-Lovich Grant Committee, and written feedback will be provided to the students by May 2014
7. Funding will be dispersed in May 2014 and winners announced at the 2014 Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists & Herpetologists

Rules

1. The applicant must be a member in good standing of The Herpetologists' League
2. Both M.S, and Ph.D, graduate students are eligible. The applicant must be registered and in good standing in a degree-granting program
3. One proposal is allowed per applicant per year.
4. The project must be original work that is authored and conducted by the applicant
5. Projects that are already fully supported by other sources are not eligible
6. The research must involve amphibians or reptiles that occur in the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. The animals' distribution must include at least one of the following states: Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Utah, Chihuahua, Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Zacatecas, Durango, Nuevo Leon, or San Luis Potosi

Preparation Guidelines (see HL website for any updates to these guidelines)

1. Word limit: 1200 words, not including citations, budget, cover page or CV.
2. Double spaced, 12 pt font
3. Margins: 1 inch
4. Include the cover page provided at the HL website.
5. Include a detailed budget, as well as sources and amounts of current and pending support
6. Include a two-page CV that includes telephone number, e-mail, and mailing address
7. Arrange in advance for one letter of support to be sent separately by the supporter to Carol Spencer (atrox<at>berkeley.edu)

For more information please visit:

<http://www.herpetologistsleague.org/en/gradres.php>

##

4. New Mexico Ornithological Society (NMOS) Research Grants - Call for Proposals – Proposals due March 1st, 2014

The New Mexico Ornithological Society (NMOS) offers two research grants each year to help support research on New Mexico birds.

- The **Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant** for \$1000, is presented in memory of Ryan Beaulieu. Following the wishes of Ryan's family, this grant will support research projects that do not involve the collection of birds.
- The **NMOS Research Grant** is also available for \$1000.

The criteria for both grants are:

- the grant money must be spent while conducting research on birds in New Mexico;

- the recipient must either present a paper based on the research at an annual NMOS Meeting or submit an article based on the research to the NMOS Bulletin; and
- preference will be given to student applicants

A short research proposal (2 pages maximum) must be submitted describing the nature of the project and how the allocated funds are to be spent (e.g., on gas, tape recording, specific equipment, etc.). Each proposal should state clearly whether the project does or does not involve collection of birds. Each proposal should include two letters of reference, one of which should be from a graduate advisor if the applicant is a graduate student. References should comment on the applicant's commitment to New Mexico ornithology and ability to design and carry out creative, independent research. All proposals will be evaluated together and up to two proposals will be awarded grants. The Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant will fund a project that does not involve the collection of birds; the NMOS research grant is open to all projects that meet the criteria above.

Please submit your electronic proposal, "NMOS Grant" in the subject line, to:

Dr. Janet Ruth
USGS Arid Lands Field Station
Albuquerque, NM (janet_ruth@usgs.gov)

The deadline for 2013 Research Grant proposals is 1 March 2014. All applications will be acknowledged within a week of proposal receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is the applicant's responsibility to follow up with their submission to ensure consideration.

Grant awards are announced at the NMOS Annual Meeting (26 April 2014 - Albuquerque). Information available on the NMOS website www.nmbirds.org

For more information please visit: http://www.nmbirds.org/?page_id=85

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5. Judge hands stiff fine, jail sentence to Cobden reptile smuggler

By Robert Sibley, OTTAWA CITIZEN November 14, 2013

OTTAWA — On an August day three years ago, a dozen or so law enforcement officers — Environment Canada agents, RCMP, Border Security services, Fish and Wildlife staff among them — waited patiently while a small boat motored

across the St. Lawrence River from the Akwesasne Reservation on the United States side of the border to land on the Cornwall side.

They waited as the man in the boat gave three crates to another man who had been waiting for him. They waited as the second man loaded the crates into his truck. And that's when waiting came to an end.

The results of that long wait came to a conclusion in a Cornwall court late last week when a judge sentenced a Cobden man, Dennis Day, to a 90-day jail sentence and slapped him with the \$50,000 fine. Day, in his 40s, had pleaded guilty in July to two counts of illegally importing reptiles into Canada. A few months earlier, in March, he'd been convicted under the Customs Act of smuggling, keeping, acquiring and disposing of illegally imported goods. (The man who operated the boat was charged and convicted by American authorities.)

Tuesday's sentencing was the culmination of a lengthy investigation into a growing problem — the smuggling of reptiles, birds, animals, and plants, many of them rare and endangered, both from and to Canada — that has law enforcement agencies scrambling to keep up with increasingly sophisticated smugglers who cater to those who think they need to own an exotic species. And some are prepared to pay a steep price to satisfy their fetish for the exotic.

"There's the illegal drug trade, illegal immigration, illegal weapons trade; wildlife is up there," says Martin Thabault, operations manager for wildlife enforcement in Ontario who's been involved in the Day case. "There's a lot of money to be made. We're talking about plants, lumber. Or it could be rhino horn, exotic leathers, exotic pets. It's pretty widespread.

Thabault and his colleagues hope the sentence meted out to Day sends a message of deterrence.

"We've had similar files in the past (but) this was probably one of the more important cases in recent history," he says.

Part of the problem they face — at least this as been the case in the past — is how seriously prosecutors and judges take the crime in terms of imposing stiff fines and jail terms. Day, for example, has been convicted on previous charges related to the importation of animals. This was the first time for a jail term.

But judicial attitudes might be changing. In October, a New Brunswick man, Gregory Logan, was hit with a \$385,000 fine and given an eight-month conditional sentence that included four months of house arrest after he was convicted of illegally exporting 250 Narwhal tusks. It was the largest penalty imposed so far in Canada under laws regulating the trading of wild animals and plants.

“Historically, we haven’t seen a lot of jail time (imposed on smugglers), but now we’re seeing that increasing,” said Glen Ehler, acting director general for wildlife enforcement, citing the Logan case. And that, he said, is a positive sign the issue of illegal trade in animals and plants is being taken more seriously.

Still, despite the harsher penalties, the potential profits from smuggling exotic species, often rare and endangered, makes the enterprise worthwhile to those so inclined. In Day’s case, the three crates and their 205 small reptiles — everything from Chinese striped turtles and green iguanas to tortoises and chameleons — were valued at \$50,000.

In the Day case, the reptiles, which as a species account for about 25 per cent of the illegal animal trade, were heading to pet stores. Some store owners might not have known the animals they were buying were obtained illegally, but some undoubtedly did.

“Day was taking orders (from pet store owners) and getting the animals in the country and then delivering them,” says Thabault. “There were definitely buyers for these reptiles. The bigger customers were interviewed and charges have been laid. Some of them are in the courts system right now. ”

Most of the seized animals were on the endangered species list, says Thabault, noting that they remain safe and healthy. They’d been purchased from licensed dealers in California and Florida who were unaware of Day’s plans.

According to Thabault, some pet owners in Quebec have been convicted as a result of the Day case. As well, another accused, Mark Ostroff, was convicted in Cornwall in December after pleading guilty to unlawfully importing animals. He was fined \$40,000 and sentenced to three years’ probation.

The maximum penalty in a criminal conviction is a \$150,000 and/or five years in jail, or both. A summary conviction can bring a fine of as much as \$25,000 and/or up to six months in jail. Corporations caught and convicted face \$300,000 fines.

Thabault said he and his colleagues are satisfied with the penalty levelled against Day, even though he’ll be doing his jail time on weekends, and even though he’s a repeat offender. “This is the fine we were asking for, and this is the jail time we were asking for. So basically we got what we were asking for.”

The point, he said, was to send a message to other would-be smugglers, and, hopefully, set an example for the courts to follow in future cases.

“We have to tell our story and explain that what we do is important. We’re talking about endangered species.

"If a species goes extinct, how much is it worth? You cannot put a price tag on that."

Article link:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/life/Judge+hands+stiff+fine+jail+sentence+Cobden+reptile+smuggler/9163019/story.html>

##

6. U.S. crushes 6 tons of illegal ivory

Nov. 15, 2013 at 2:30 AM

COMMERCE CITY, Colo., Nov. 15 (UPI) -- U.S. authorities crushed 6 tons of ivory tusks and trinkets from butchered elephants, appealing to end an illegal \$10 billion trade funding crime and terrorism.

"By taking this action, the United States will help raise the profile of the issue and inspire other nations," Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Judy Garber said at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, 8 miles northeast of downtown Denver.

"All of us have to step up our game and work together to put an end to this before we lose the species forever," she said in remarks quoted by The Denver Post.

Poached ivory may have financed the September Somali terrorist attack on Kenya's Westgate shopping mall that killed at least 72 people, Garber said.

Secretary of State John Kerry offered a \$1 million reward Thursday for information that could help end the Xaysavang Network that "facilitates the killing of endangered elephants, rhinos and other species for products such as ivory."

The Laos-based criminal syndicate has affiliates in South Africa, Mozambique, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and China, the State Department said in a statement.

The group's profits fund narcotics, arms and human trafficking, the department said.

At least 25,000 elephants were illegally killed in 2012, and even more this year, said the U.N.-backed Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, also known as the Washington Convention.

The latest slaughter figure is the highest since CITES banned ivory commerce in 1989.

U.S. Assistant Interior Secretary Dan Ashe compared the intensifying elephant killings to the great slaughter of American bison in the late 19th century that brought the number of bison remaining alive in North America to as low as 541.

"We have a moral obligation to respond," he told U.S. officials and wildlife conservation leaders at the arsenal to witness the crush in a giant blue rock-grinder near a warehouse. "You have the chance to crush wildlife trafficking and save these magnificent creatures."

The United States bans the import and export of African ivory. But it does not ban the sales of ivory that arrived into the country before 1989.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will donate the pulverized ivory to a still-to-be-determined museum for a monument to slaughtered elephants, officials said.

Officials rejected the idea the crush would fuel demand for illegal ivory.

"This ivory would never be made available to the market," the Fish and Wildlife Service said in a statement. "Its destruction has no impact on the overall supply and does not create any incentive for poaching.

"By demonstrating our commitment to combat poaching and illegal trade, and to arrest and prosecute people who engage in these activities, we are providing a strong disincentive to poachers and wildlife traffickers," it said.

Article link: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2013/11/15/US-crushes-6-tons-of-illegal-ivory/UPI-81661384500600/?spt=rln&or=1

##

7. Study: California Wind Power is the Worst For Wildlife

by Chris Clarke on November 20, 2013 2:40 PM

California's newest wind turbines may be killing more than 100,000 birds a year, according to a peer-reviewed study to be published in December. Those mortalities seem to climb the taller wind turbines get. And California wind turbines kill more wildlife per megawatt than identical turbines in other parts of the country.

What's more, though some have pointed to replacements of the old-style lattice structures holding up turbines with monopoles as a way of making wind turbines safer for birds -- by reducing the possibility that birds will try to perch on the

turbine structures -- the study indicates that swapping lattice for monopole might not be the quick fix wind advocates had hoped for.

The study, conducted by Scott R. Loss and Peter P. Marra from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute's Migratory Bird Center and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Tom Will, appears in the December 2013 issue of the journal *Biological Conservation*.

The study was based on a survey of publicly available literature of bird mortalities at monopole-mounted wind turbines, and so its results are almost certain to be quite conservative: studies the trio included vary in the types of mortality surveys they include, and the group excluded individual studies that lumped turbine strike mortalities in with other causes of death. The three note that gaps in the information they used, which might affect the accuracy of their conclusions, could be filled if wind turbine owners were required to report their wildlife kills more stringently:

Despite numerous calls for an increase in the transparent reporting of study results and availability of reports to the public and scientists, collision data largely remains confidential and/or offline. Furthermore, reports that have been released to the public (e.g. on the internet) are often difficult to locate. We join previous authors in calling for increased transparency in data reporting. Requiring industry reports to be made publicly available would greatly improve understanding of wind energy impacts to wildlife.

But complete or not, the numbers the authors estimate for wildlife losses to newer, taller turbines are sobering. The study estimates that California's 13,851 monopole wind turbines (at the time of the study), which have a capacity of 5,796 megawatts of power output, kill between 56,095 and 161,335 birds each year -- with a mean figure of 108,715. That works out to an average of 7.85 annual wildlife kills per turbine (with those lower and upper estimates ranging from 4.05 to 11.65) and 18.76 annual deaths per megawatt of capacity (lower and upper estimates of 9.68 and 27.84, respectively).

Those figures are even more striking when the study puts them into a national context. California was one of four regions the authors designated for number crunching purposes, along with the East, the West (excluding California) and the Great Plains. Looking strictly at the mean figures provided, California monopole turbines' 108,715 estimated yearly wildlife kills are 46 percent of the 234,012 estimated for the nation as a whole, despite the fact that California's turbines make up only about a tenth of the country's wind generating capacity.

On a deaths-per-megawatt basis, California really stands out with a mean of 18.76 annual deaths per megawatt compared to 3.86 for the eastern region, 2.83 for the west, and 1.81 for the Great Plains. California's annual deaths per megawatt is so high that it pushes the national average above any of the three

other regions, at 4.12 estimated annual bird deaths per megawatt of generating capacity.

And again, the authors excluded turbines on lattice mounts from their considerations, which means that the majority of turbines at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area, notorious for its high rate of bird deaths, isn't included in California's startling figures.

The authors also found that turbines with higher poles seem to kill more birds.

The new study's mortality estimates are significantly higher than some previous works, especially including those in a 2009 work by Benjamin Sovacool that explicitly dismissed wind-related wildlife mortality as a valid concern compared to other sources of power.

Loss and his colleagues anticipate Sovacool-styled objections even as they undermine his earlier wind-friendly work:

[O]ur results suggest that the amount of U.S. bird mortality caused by collisions at monopole wind turbines is non-trivial. Furthermore, the projected trend for a continued increase in turbine size coupled with our finding of greater bird collision mortality at taller turbines suggests that precaution must be taken to reduce adverse impacts to wildlife populations when making decisions about the type of wind turbines to install. Despite an apparent lower magnitude of bird mortality at wind turbines compared to other anthropogenic mortality sources (e.g., windows/buildings, communication towers, feral and pet cats), mortality at wind facilities should not be dismissed offhand.

Article link: <http://www.kcet.org/news/rewire/wind/study-california-wind-turbines-deadliest-in-us.html>

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8. Florida wildlife officials seek to avoid flooding Everglades animals

November 21, 2013|By Andy Reid, Sun Sentinel

Concerns about drowning Florida panthers, deer and other vulnerable Everglades animals prompted state wildlife officials Wednesday to call for new water level limits in western Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

Rising waters during a rainier-than-usual summer flooded wildlife habitat and left animals at risk in the Everglades water conservation areas north of Everglades National Park.

The prolonged flooding of tree islands and other habitat was worsened by lingering delays in Everglades restoration projects intended to restore more water flows south to the park and Florida Bay.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on Wednesday recommended setting a 2-foot maximum average depth at the height of the rainy season in Everglades water conservation areas that stretch across Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

The targeted maximum water level would drop to near ground level during the peak of the dry season, according to the proposal.

While the commission doesn't run South Florida's flood-control system, the measure is meant to make the environmental consequences of high water levels a greater priority for state and federal water managers during the rainy season.

"We are talking about one of the natural wonders of the world," said Everglades advocate Ron Bergeron, a member of the commission's board. "Without being able to move water ... we are drowning all the wildlife."

In addition to the 2-foot maximum depth, the commission also called for state and federal officials to establish emergency measures for draining water out of conservation areas that could kick in before the next summer-to-fall rainy season.

"From our perspective, it's an emergency," commission Chairman Richard Corbett said.

Representatives for the Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District on Wednesday said they continue to work on efforts to jumpstart Everglades restoration and get more water moving south.

"There probably is some room in there to make some minor adjustments," said Lt. Col. Tom Greco, the Army Corps of Engineers deputy commander for South Florida.

Federal official and the South Florida Water Management District are "very close" to reaching an agreement that could enable moving more water south without running afoul of pollution control limits, said Ernie Barnett, the district's assistant executive director.

Before farming and development got in the way, water once naturally flowed in shallow sheets from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades.

Now much of that water gets drained out to sea for flood control, with damaging environmental consequences on coastal fishing grounds. Farther south, water

flows to Everglades National Park are blocked by roads and levees and also limited by pollution control standards.

Bergeron over the summer sounded the alarm about rising water levels by taking federal and state officials, as well as TV cameras, out on airboat tours and wading into chest-high water.

Wildlife officials say prolonged high water in the conservation areas kills deer and other prey species; making survival harder for Florida panthers and other endangered species in the Everglades.

The long-term fix planned for South Florida's water management problem is multibillion-dollar Everglades restoration, which calls for building reservoirs and treatment areas to hold onto and clean up stormwater so that it can be used to replenish Florida's famed River of Grass.

The latest effort, called the Central Everglades project, would get more lake water flowing south toward Everglades National Park by removing portions of levees, filling in sections of canals and boosting pumping capacity.

But Bergeron contends that the \$1.8 billion Central Everglades plan could take too long to get done.

"We will destroy [the Everglades] before we get it approved, funded and built," Bergeron said. "It's very frustrating."

To allow more immediate relief when rising water levels threaten wildlife, the conservation commission wants federal officials to at least temporarily ease off water pollution restrictions and allow more water to flow south.

Commissioners Wednesday expressed concerns that state and federal disputes over how to divvy up the costs of long-planned Everglades restoration projects have added to construction delays.

"It just doesn't make any sense," Commissioner Aliese Priddy said about the high water levels allowed to linger in the Everglades water conservation areas. "It's a travesty."

Article link: http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2013-11-21/news/fl-everglades-water-concerns-20131120_1_everglades-water-conservation-areas-everglades-restoration-florida-bay

##

9. Backlog of Endangered Species Awaiting Protection Reaches Lowest Level Since 1970s

For Immediate Release, November 21, 2013
Contact: Tierra Curry, (928) 522-3681

Landmark Agreement to Protect America's Most Endangered Species Is Working

WASHINGTON— For the first time since the 1970s, the number of plants and animals on the waiting list for Endangered Species Act protection has dropped below 150. The progress the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made last year addressing the backlog highlights the success of a landmark agreement reached with the Center for Biological Diversity in 2011 requiring the Service to speed protection decisions for 757 species. The 2013 “candidate notice of review” released by the agency today includes 146 species now awaiting protection: 94 animals and 52 plants. In fiscal year 2013, 81 species were awarded final protection under the Endangered Species Act.

“It is so exciting to see imperiled wildlife from around the country get the Endangered Species Act protection that will save them from extinction. The Fish and Wildlife Service deserves credit for the excellent progress it’s making protecting our most endangered animals and plants,” said Tierra Curry, a conservation biologist at the Center.

In the past year dozens of critically imperiled species gained final protection, including Hawaiian flowers and damselflies, freshwater mussels from the Southeast with names like “fuzzy pigtoe” and “rabbitsfoot,” and butterflies from the Pacific Northwest and Las Vegas. Also protected were the Florida bonneted bat, salamanders from Texas, and a fish from West Virginia called the diamond darter.

“Candidates” are species that have been found to warrant protection, but instead of gaining protection are placed on a waiting list where they may languish for decades. The Fish and Wildlife Service issues an annual notice of review describing its progress over the year in addressing the backlog.

During the past year the Service issued proposals to protect dozens of new species under the Act including the wolverine, lesser prairie chicken, Yosemite toad, red knot, a shorebird along the Atlantic Coast, and the northern long-eared bat, which was once found in 39 states before its population was decimated by a fungal disease called white-nose syndrome. Also among the proposed were the western yellow-billed cuckoo, which only lives along desert streams, four kinds of pocket gophers from Washington state, and butterflies from Florida and the Dakotas.

The vast majority of the 146 species still on the waiting list will receive listing proposals in the next three years. Species still waiting include the Pacific walrus, eastern gopher tortoise, west coast fisher, Lower Colorado River roundtail chub, Sonoran desert tortoise, several types of Hawaiian yellow-faced bees, and the Black Warrior waterdog, a large salamander from Alabama.

In today's review the Service elevated the priority of several species, including the southern Idaho ground squirrel, Washington ground squirrel, Kentucky arrow darter and Cumberland arrow darter, the latter two of which are colorful fish threatened by mountaintop-removal coal mining in Tennessee and Kentucky.

"To build on the great progress in listing species, we urge Congress to designate the funding for endangered species recovery that the Service desperately needs to accomplish its goals. Congress must recognize that protecting endangered species also protects public health and the long-term well-being of our country, which should be a fiscal priority," said Curry.

Article link:

http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2013/endangered-species-11-21-2013.html

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10. Scientists discover 2178 'irreplaceable' ecosystems

By Chanah Rubenstein Nov 25, 2013 in Environment

A study has found more than 2,000 exclusive habitats around the world that are fundamental to the survival of threatened wildlife. The researchers are hoping that better management could help the susceptible ecosystems.

The study looked at 173,000 terrestrial protected areas and 21,500 species on IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Threatened Species, and then compared the influence each site makes to the long term survival of the species, many of which can't be found elsewhere.

Researchers then listed 2178 irreplaceable ecosystems that are protected and 192 sites that are being proposed, by ranking their importance, reports Mother Nature Network.

Numerous sites overlap, and for this reason, the researchers combined areas and created a list of 78 clusters of "exceptionally irreplaceable" habitats, reported Business Insider Australia.

While many of the areas are already under protection by UNESCO World Heritage, there are still many that are not. According to Business Insider Australia, 13 percent of the world's landmass is currently protected.

Previous studies on susceptible ecosystems had hoped to increase the number of protected areas; however, this study is aiming to have better management for each site. According to scientists, having the designation of being protected is great on paper, but what really creates progress is management, and that is what is falling behind.

Paul Salaman, the CEO of the Rainforest Trust, and an expert in Columbian biodiversity, says, "Páramo Urrao National Protective Forests Reserves, in Colombia, for example, does not really exist...It was legally created in 1975, but this was never translated into on-the-ground management," reports the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Simon Stuart, chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission adds, "Protected areas can only fulfil their role in reducing biodiversity loss if they are effectively managed...governments should pay particular attention to the management effectiveness of highly irreplaceable protected areas."

Many of the top sites in the study are located in South America, with the top two areas being in Venezuela: the Formaciones de Tepuyes and Canaima National Park. The location with the highest number of species under threat is Columbia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta Natural National Park, reports GMA News. Many of these areas are being threatened by deforestation, resource extraction, and climate change.

Other areas on the list include: Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in Palawan, Philippines, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, Australia, and Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park, Panama/Costa Rica. The complete database is open for the public to browse.

The study was published in the journal Science and features authors from France, Switzerland, Australia, United Arab Emirates, the US, and the UK.

Article link: <http://digitaljournal.com/article/362806>

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11. Catastrophic Collapse of Sahara Desert's Wildlife

Dec. 3, 2013

A new study led by the Wildlife Conservation Society and Zoological Society of London warns that the world's largest tropical desert, the Sahara, has suffered a catastrophic collapse of its wildlife populations.

The study by more than 40 authors representing 28 scientific organizations assessed 14 desert species and found that a shocking half of those are regionally extinct or confined to one percent or less of their historical range. A chronic lack of studies across the region due to past and ongoing insecurity makes it difficult to be certain of the causes of these declines, although overhunting is likely to have played a role. The study was published in the early online version of the journal *Diversity and Distributions*.

The Bubal hartebeest is extinct; the scimitar horned oryx is extinct in the wild; and the African wild dog and African lion have vanished from the Sahara. Other species have only fared slightly better: the dama gazelle and addax are gone from 99 percent of their range; the leopard from 97 percent, and the Saharan cheetah from 90. Only the Nubian ibex still inhabits most of its historical range, but even this species is classified as vulnerable due to numerous threats including widespread hunting.

The authors say that more conservation support and scientific attention needs to be paid to deserts noting that 2014 is the halfway point in the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification and the fourth year of the United Nations Decade for Biodiversity.

"The Sahara serves as an example of a wider historical neglect of deserts and the human communities who depend on them," said the study's lead author Sarah Durant of WCS and ZSL. "The scientific community can make an important contribution to conservation in deserts by establishing baseline information on biodiversity and developing new approaches to sustainable management of desert species and ecosystems."

The authors note that some governments have recently made large commitments to protecting the Sahara: Niger has just established the massive 97,000 square kilometer (37,451 square miles) Termit and Tin Toumma National Nature Reserve, which harbors most of the world's 200 or so remaining wild addax and one of a handful of surviving populations of dama gazelle and Saharan cheetah. There is also hope that the scimitar horned oryx may be reintroduced in the wild in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve, with the support of the Chadian government.

Article link: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/12/131203124530.htm>

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12. Colorado Parks and Wildlife to collar elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep and moose

Posted: 12/10/2013

Colorado Parks and wildlife officials are going hunting for big game this winter -- not to kill the animals, but to collar them.

Workers will be in low-flying helicopters and airplanes from early December through March to do an inventory of thousands of animals. They will also capture and radio-collar 75 elk, 90 moose, 20 desert bighorn sheep, 25 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and 1,300 mule deer.

Officials said with the data collected, agency researchers and biologists will track the progress of several wildlife management efforts, check the overall health of big game, help wildlife managers form population models and set future hunting license numbers.

The animals will be collared two different ways. Some will be fitted with a GPS or radio collar at the capture site and released within minutes. Others will be lifted and delivered to a nearby base camp where a group of researchers, veterinarians and volunteers will take blood samples and record body condition, weight, age and sex. A collar will then be placed on the animal before it is released.

Article link: <http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/colorado-parks-and-wildlife-to-collar-elk-mule-deer-bighorn-sheep-and-moose>

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13. Western governors show wildlife maps at Vegas meeting

Dec. 12, 2013

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Governors in 16 states are unveiling a high-tech wildlife habitat mapping project they hope will encourage economic development across the West while protecting the region's environmental treasures from Puget Sound to the Rocky Mountains.

The Western Governors' Association wants to make it easier to chart paths across large landscapes where developers can expect the least regulatory resistance and threat of litigation as they draft plans to build highways, dig gold mines and erect power lines, pipelines or wind farms.

Five years in the making, the database will connect 16 western states from California and Alaska to Montana and Oklahoma with a first-of-its-kind online system of colorful GIS maps displaying wildlife habitat, wetlands and other valuable natural resources — much of it detailed down to square-mile increments.

The Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool, or CHAT, provides layers of data that rate the resources on a scale of one to six, from most to least “crucial.” Individual states determine those priorities based on their information about such things as the condition of the habitat and the individual species’ economic and recreational importance.

“The governors intent back in 2008 really was to cater to industries within their states who need data while at the same time conserving the resources the states are blessed with and the governors are charged with preserving,” said Carly Brown, policy manager for the Western Governors Association.

“It’s going to provide that first look — a 30,000-foot view of the situation on the ground. It’s meant to be a starting point for states with different priorities and different resource needs to bring all their information together,” she told The Associated Press before the WGA planned to announce details of the effort on Thursday at its two-day, annual gathering in Las Vegas.

“If I’m a transportation planner working in Walla Walla, Wash., and I want to modify a highway for safety concerns along the Washington-Oregon border, I can look at different routes and draw different lines to see what kind of crucial habitat I run into, and where it ranks on the scale of one to six,” Brown said.

The Energy Department provided a \$3 million grant and individual states contributed the time of mapping specialists the past three years to help gather, organize and input the information, WGA spokesman Joe Rassenfoss said. It’s expected to be especially helpful for projects that may encounter species in multiple states, like the northern spotted owl in the Pacific Northwest, the sage grouse in the Great Basin or the prairie chicken in the Southwest.

“It’s the one-stop shopping feature that is so powerful about CHAT,” he said.

Energy industry leaders agree.

“That did not previously exist,” said Robert Veldman, senior environmental adviser for the Houston-based Noble Energy, which does oil and gas drilling in the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico and recently starting exploration in Nevada.

“It will be instrumental in supporting Noble Energy’s commitment to protecting wildlife and their habitats, particularly during project planning, infrastructure route

selection and in doing due diligence for acquisitions and divestitures,” Veldman said.

Brown said conservation groups and land trusts have expressed interest in the data to help make decisions about prioritizing protection of wildlife or purchasing property most valuable to their preservation mission.

California, Montana, Washington, Wyoming and Kansas already are utilizing their own state databases. Nevada plans to roll out its new maps Thursday in concert with the regional package, with New Mexico and Oregon to follow later this month.

The other states hope to complete theirs in the months ahead — Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Oklahoma, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah.

“Mining companies like to say, ‘The gold is where the gold is, that’s where we need to go,’” said Chet Van Dellen, GIS coordinator for Nevada’s Department of Wildlife. “We like to say the animals are where the animals are.”

The “crucial habitat” is not to be confused with critical habitat, a legal term when it comes to protecting wildlife under the Endangered Species Act.

Developers and U.S. regulators still must complete environmental assessments as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. But the habitat maps themselves carry no regulatory authority, and developers will be free to pursue projects regardless of what shows up in the path of their projects, although sometimes with a healthy price tag.

“It really is a pro-development tool,” Van Dellen said. “We’re just letting you know if that’s the piece of ground you are going to commit to, you might expect a bumpier ride than a smoother ride. If you go this way, you are going to cross all this important stuff, but if you go this way, you are not.”

Article link: <http://www.rgj.com/viewart/20131212/NEWS07/312120038/Western-governors-show-wildlife-maps-Vegas-meeting>

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