

Animal Rights and Imperiled Species: Trump Administration Delays Lifesaving Protections

for Wolverine, Hermes Copper Butterfly, Candy Darter, 43 Other Species. Feds Fall Behind for Third Year on Backlog of Wildlife Needing Protection

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The Trump administration has failed to make protection decisions for dozens of imperiled species as promised in a [workplan](#) developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in late 2016. The plan aims to address a backlog of more than 500 species awaiting protection, including the wolverine and the Sierra Nevada Red Fox.

In total, the administration failed to designate protected critical habitat or to make decisions about whether species should be added to the threatened or endangered lists for 46 species in fiscal year 2019, which ended Sept. 30. This is the third straight year the administration has fallen behind on the backlog of wildlife needing protection.

“Scientists across the world are sounding the alarm over the extinction crisis, yet the Trump administration won’t even let the fire trucks out of the station,” said **Noah Greenwald**, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “To have any chance at survival, these species need protection, not more delay.”

Overall, the Trump administration has only protected 19 species and only three in all of fiscal year 2019. This is the lowest of any administration at this point in their term.

The 46 species occur in more than 20 states from Florida to Washington and face a plethora of threats.

The secretive black rail, for example, is rapidly losing coastal marshes along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts to sea level rise and development. Whitebark pine is losing its high mountain habitats across the west to climate change and being decimated by an introduced disease. And the yellow-billed cuckoo has lost the streamside cottonwood forests where it lives to the multitude of threats to western rivers, from dams to cows to overuse.

“The double whammy of habitat destruction and climate change is putting species across the country in jeopardy,” said Greenwald. “The Endangered Species Act has saved 99 percent of species under its protection and it can save these plants and animals too, but only if they get the protection they need.”

Scientists recently determined that North America has lost as many as [three billion birds](#) in the last 50 years, with many common species having undergone severe declines. One interesting finding of this study is that waterfowl, which have strong regulatory protections for their habitat, actually increased. Likewise, most [birds protected under the Endangered Species Act](#) are also stable or improving.

“Despite claims to the contrary from the Trump administration and its polluting industry benefactors, strong laws to protect our land, air, water and wildlife work, particularly if enforced,” said Greenwald. “We’ll definitely go to court to make sure these species get the protection they’re due.”

Table 1. Forty-six species that didn’t get protection decisions in fiscal year 2019.

Species Name	Action Type	First Scheduled	Range
Atlantic pigtoe	FL, FCH	FY19	GA, NC, SC, VA
Bartram stonecrop	12M	FY18	AZ
Beardless chinch weed	12M	FY18	AZ
Big Creek crayfish	Discretionary Status Review	FY19	MO
Big Cypress epidendrum	12M	FY18	FL
Black pine snake	FCH	FY18	AL, MS, LA
Black rail	FL	FY19	AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TX, VA
Black-capped petrel	FL	FY19	FL, GA, SC, NC, PR, VA, VI
Brawley's Fork crayfish	12M	FY22	TN
California spotted owl	12M	FY19	CA, OR
Candy darter	FCH	FY19	VA, WV
Cape Sable orchid	12M	FY18	FL
Chapin Mesa milkvetch	Proposed Listing Determination	FY18	CO

Donrichardsonia macroneuron (unnamed moss)	12M	FY18	TX
False spike	12M	FY18	TX
Pacific Fisher	FL	FY19	CA, OR, WA
Florida bonneted bat	PCH	FY17	FL
Florida bristle fern	PCH	FY18	FL
Graham's beardtongue	FL	FY19	UT
Bi-state sage grouse	CA, NV	FY19	CA, NV
Guadalupe orb	Discretionary Status Review/PLPCH	FY18	TX
Hermes copper butterfly	Proposed Listing Determination	FY17	CA
Humboldt marten	FL, PCH	FY19	CA, OR
Island marble butterfly	FL, FCH	FY19	WA
Lesser slender salamander	12M	FY19	CA
Louisiana pine snake	PCH	FY19	LA, TX
Meltwater lednian stonefly	Final	FY17	MT, WY
Northern spotted owl	12M/Uplisting	FY17	CA, OR, WA
Panama City crayfish	PCH	FY19	FL

Peppered chub	12M	FY18	CO, KA, NM, OK, TX
Sierra Nevada red fox	Proposed Listing Determination	FY18	CA, OR
Slenderclaw crayfish	FL, FCH	FY19	AL
St. Francis River crayfish	Discretionary Status Review	FY19	MO
Suwannee moccasinshell	PCH	FY18	FL
Texas fatmucket	Proposed Listing Determination	FY18	TX
Texas fawnsfoot	Proposed Listing Determination	FY18	TX
Texas hornshell	PCH	FY19	TX
Texas pimpleback	Proposed Listing Determination	FY18	TX
Trispot darter	FCH, 4D	FY19	AL, TN, GA
Western glacier stonefly	Final	FY17	MT, WY
White River beardtongue	FL	FY19	UT
Whitebark pine	Proposed Listing Determination	FY19	CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA, WY
American wolverine	Final Listing Determination	FY18	CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY
Wright's marsh thistle	Proposed Listing Determination	FY17	NM
Yellow lance	PCH	FY17	MD, NC, SC, VA
Yellow-billed cuckoo	rPCH	FY17	AZ, NM, CA, CO, NV, UT, ID

Key

- 12M: 12-month finding determining if species warrants listing
- PL: Proposed listing
- FL: Final listing
- PCH: Proposed critical habitat
- FCH: Final critical habitat
- Candidate species: A species that has been found to warrant protection, but is waitlisted
- 4(d): A rule defining prohibited activities for a threatened species

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