

genetic research at facilities in Oregon and Washington for the purpose of enhancing Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits survival and viability.

Permit No. TE-072650

Applicant: Jennifer Michaud-Laird, Sebastopol, California.

The applicant requests a permit to take (harass by survey, capture, handle, and release) the California tiger salamander Sonoma County distinct population segment (*Ambystoma californiense*) in conjunction with surveys in Sonoma County, California for the purpose of enhancing its survival.

Permit No. TE-072651

Applicant: Diana Immel, Davis, California.

The applicant requests a permit to remove/reduce to possession *Trifolium amoenum* (showy Indian clover) in conjunction with reintroduction efforts in Sonoma and Marin Counties, California for the purpose of enhancing its survival.

Permit No. TE-072873

Applicant: Kevin D. Matson, St. Louis, Missouri.

The applicant requests a permit to take (collect blood) captive Hawaiian geese (*Branta sandvicensis*) and captive iō (*Buteo solitarius*) in conjunction with disease research at the Three Ring Ranch Exotic Animal Sanctuary, Kailue-Kona, Hawaii for the purpose of enhancing their survival.

We solicit public review and comment on each of these recovery permit applications.

Dated: June 12, 2003.

Bill Shake,

Deputy Regional Director, Region 1, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 03-16683 Filed 7-1-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Endangered and Threatened Species Permit Applications

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of applications.

SUMMARY: The following applicants have applied for scientific research permits to conduct certain activities with endangered species pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

DATES: To ensure consideration, written comments must be received on or before August 1, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be submitted to the Chief, Endangered Species Division, Ecological Services, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103. Documents and other information submitted with these applications are available for review, subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act. Documents will be available for public inspection, by appointment only, during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 500 Gold Avenue SW., Room 4102, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Please refer to the respective permit number for each application when submitting comments. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chief, Endangered Species Division, (505) 248-6920.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Permit No. TE-057946

Applicant: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Flagstaff, Arizona.

Applicant requests an amendment to an existing permit to allow presence/absence surveys for black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) within Arizona and New Mexico.

Permit No. TE-072498

Applicant: Shaw Environmental, Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Applicant requests a new permit for research and recovery purposes to conduct presence/absence surveys for the following species within Arizona and New Mexico: black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), northern aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis septentrionalis*), and interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*).

Permit No. TE-011464

Applicant: Caryn Vaughn, Norman, Oklahoma.

Applicant requests an amendment to an existing permit to allow surveys and collection of the scaleshell mussel (*Leptodea leptodon*) within Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Permit No. TE-054803

Applicant: Michael Larisch, Silver City, New Mexico.

Applicant requests an amendment to an existing permit to allow presence/absence surveys for the following species within New Mexico: black-

footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*).

Permit No. TE-073460

Applicant: Aaron Flesch, Tucson, Arizona.

Applicant requests a new permit for research and recovery purposes to conduct presence/absence surveys, nest monitoring, radio tracking, trapping, and removal of radio transmitters for cactus ferruginous pygmy owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*) within Arizona.

Permit No. TE-072500

Applicant: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Champaign, Illinois.

Applicant requests a permit for research and recovery purposes to receive fountain darters (*Etheostoma fonticola*) and Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texana*), in order to assess the effects of fog oil and other military species chemical compounds on these species.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*

Dated: June 19, 2003.

Bryan Arroyo,

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

[FR Doc. 03-16684 Filed 7-1-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 90-day Finding for a Petition to Delist the Mexican Bobcat

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of 90-day petition finding and initiation of status review.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce a 90-day finding for a petition to delist the Mexican bobcat (*Lynx rufus escuinapae*) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. After reviewing the petition and available scientific and commercial information, we find that the petition presents substantial information indicating that listing may no longer be warranted. With the publication of this notice, we are initiating a status review of the Mexican bobcat. In addition to requesting information on the status of the Mexican bobcat, we are requesting information on whether the subspecies designation is taxonomically valid. If not valid, we also request information on the status of

the listed entity within Mexico for the purpose of determining if the Mexican population constitutes a distinct population segment (DPS) or constitutes a significant portion of the range of the species. We will prepare and publish a 12-month finding.

DATES: The finding announced in this document was made on June 11, 2003. To be considered in the 12-month finding for this petition, comments and information should be submitted to us by September 30, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit information, comments, or questions concerning this petition finding to the Chief, Division of Scientific Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Rm 750, Arlington, VA 22203 (facsimile number 703-358-2276; E-mail address: *ScientificAuthority@fws.gov*). The petition, supporting information, and comments will be available for public inspection, by appointment, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen L. Anderson, Division of Scientific Authority (see **ADDRESSES** section) (telephone 703-358-1708; facsimile 703-358-2276).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 4(b)(3)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act) (16 U.S.C. 1533(b)(3)(A)), requires us to make a finding on whether a petition to list, delist, or reclassify a species presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. This finding is to be based on all information available to us at the time the finding is made. To the maximum extent practicable, this finding is to be made within 90 days of the date the petition was received, and a notice of the finding is to be published promptly in the **Federal Register**. If the finding is that substantial information was presented, we are required to promptly commence a review of the status of the involved species. After completing the status review, we will issue an additional finding (the 12-month finding) on whether delisting is, in fact, warranted.

On July 8, 1996, we received a petition dated June 30, 1996, from the National Trappers Association, Inc., Bloomington, Illinois. The petition and cover letter clearly identified itself as such and contained the name, address, and signature of the petitioning organization's representative. Information relating to the taxonomy, the present population status and

trends, and threats were included in the petition. The petition requested that we delist the Mexican bobcat under the Act, and noted that downlisting to threatened status would not be an appropriate alternative. In a letter dated November 4, 1996, we acknowledged receipt of the petition (Service, *in litt.*, 1996). We stated that we would address the petition as soon as possible. Due to staffing and budget constraints, we have been unable to process this petition until now.

The Mexican bobcat belongs to the mammalian family Felidae and has been reported to be a subspecies of *Lynx rufus*. The number of taxa described within *Lynx rufus* ranges from 11 to 14. Allen (1903) first described this subspecies from two immature male specimens found in Escuinapa, Mexico, on the basis of color and cranial differences. However, the validity of this subspecies is questionable. Samson (1979) conducted a multivariate statistical analysis of a variety of skull measurements and found cranial characteristics of *L. r. escuinapae* to be similar to those of *L. r. californicus* and *L. r. texensis*. Also, the range of *escuinapae* overlaps with the ranges of *baileyi* and *texensis*. However, McCord and Cardoza (1982) noted that statistical analysis of skull measurements only have meaning in large samples and are thus ineffective in the subspecific assignment of individual specimens. They also noted that the 11 to 14 subspecies of bobcats described to date comprise few realistically distinguishable taxa that have any real biological or conservation significance.

The majority of bobcats are found in the United States, where they range through a wide variety of habitats, including boreal coniferous and mixed forests in the north, bottomland hardwood forest and coastal swamp in the southeast, and desert and scrubland in the southwest. Even within a local area, individual bobcats usually use a variety of habitats (Wilson and Ruff 1999). Only large, intensively cultivated areas appear to be unsuitable habitat. Southern Canada represents the northern limit of bobcat range, with deep snow a significant limiting factor. With the clearing of mature coniferous forests for agriculture, the bobcat has expanded its range northward over the past century (Rollings 1945, Banfield 1974). In Mexico, bobcats are found in dry scrubland and forest of pine (*Pinus* spp.) and oak (*Quercus* spp.), principally in the mountainous northern and central parts of the country, and not in the tropical south (Hall and Kelson 1959; Gonzalez and Leal 1984 and Woloszyn and Woloszyn 1982 cited by

Nowell and Jackson 1996). *Lynx rufus escuinapae* is the southernmost race of bobcat found in Mexico.

No population estimates are available for *Lynx rufus escuinapae*, but the Mexican Government has stated that this subspecies is widespread and numerous, is not specialized in its habitat requirements, and is highly ecologically adaptable (Graciela de la Garza Garcia, Direccion General de Conservacion Ecologia de los Recursos Naturales, *in litt.* 1991).

Little information is available on utilization of the species in Mexico, but local hunting and trapping for subsistence is possible. There is no indication of illegal trade and no reported potential trade threats (Govt. of U.S. 1992; Service, *in litt.* 1992).

We listed the Mexican bobcat as an endangered species on June 14, 1976 (41 FR 24064). This subspecies was listed under the Act due to its inclusion in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). By July 1, 1975, the Convention was ratified by enough nations to enter into force and at that time the countries participating in CITES agreed that the Mexican bobcat met the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. Appendix I includes all species threatened with extinction and that are or may be affected by international trade. In 1992, during the 10-year review of species included in the CITES Appendices, we, with support from Mexico and other countries, proposed to transfer the Mexican bobcat to Appendix II, based on the bobcat's widespread and stable status in Mexico and questionable taxonomy. Our proposal was accepted and the transfer went into effect on November 6, 1992. It is not clear at this time why the Mexican bobcat was originally included in Appendix I.

Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment

We must consider any species for listing under the Act if available information indicates such action may be warranted. "Species" is defined by the Act as including any subspecies of fish and wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of vertebrate fish or wildlife that interbreeds when mature (16 U.S.C. 1532 (16)). We, along with the National Marine Fisheries Service (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-Fisheries), developed the Policy Regarding the Recognition of Distinct Vertebrate Population Segments (DPS Policy) (61 FR 4722) to help us in determining what constitutes a distinct population segment (DPS). Under this policy, we use three elements to assess

whether a population under consideration for listing may be recognized as a DPS: (1) Discreteness of the population in relation to the remainder of the species to which it belongs; (2) the significance of the population segment to the species to which it belongs; and (3) the population segment's conservation status in relation to the Act's standards for listing.

The DPS analysis is a stepwise analysis; significance is considered only when discreteness of the population has been determined, and the conservation status is considered only when both discreteness and significance of the population have been established. Discreteness refers to the isolation of a population from other members of the species and is based on two criteria: (1) Marked separation from other populations of the same taxon resulting from physical, physiological, ecological, or behavioral factors, including genetic discontinuity; or (2) populations delimited by international boundaries. If the population is determined to be discrete, we determine significance by assessing the distinct population segment's importance and/or contribution to the species throughout its range. Measures of significance may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Persistence of the discrete population segment in an ecological setting unusual or unique for the taxon; (2) evidence that loss of the discrete population segment would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon; (3) evidence that the discrete population segment represents the only surviving natural occurrence of the taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside its historic range; and (4) evidence the discrete population segment differs markedly from other populations of the taxon in its genetic characteristics.

If we determine that a population meets the discreteness and significance criteria for a distinct population segment, we evaluate the threats to determine if endangered or threatened status based on the Act's standards is warranted. Endangered means the species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened means the species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

In reviewing the taxonomic information on Mexican bobcat, it is unclear whether this subspecies is valid. If the subspecies designation is not valid, then we must evaluate the status of the listed entity in its range within Mexico and determine whether the listed entity meets the DPS policy, and

if so, whether this population of bobcat should remain listed. Although the petition did not address this issue, we will consider this question during our status review.

Petition Finding

We have reviewed the petition, the literature cited in the petition, and other literature and information available in our files. On the basis of the best scientific and commercial information, we find that the petition presents substantial information to indicate that the Mexican bobcat may warrant being delisted.

With the publication of this notice, we are initiating a status review of the Mexican bobcat to determine whether delisting is warranted based on its status and taxonomy. If this subspecies is not taxonomically valid, we will also evaluate if the population of the listed entity in Mexico constitutes a DPS, and if so, whether or not we should retain the listing of this entity. If this population does not meet the DPS criteria, we will then evaluate whether or not the population of the listed entity is endangered or threatened in a significant portion of the species' (*i.e.*, *Lynx rufus*) range.

Public Information Solicited

When we make a finding that sufficient information exists to indicate that delisting of a species may be warranted, we are required to promptly commence a review of the status of the species. To ensure that the status review is complete and based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we are soliciting information on the Mexican bobcat (*Lynx rufus escuinapae*) throughout the listed entity's range in Mexico. If we determine that the subspecies designation is not valid, then information on the status of the listed entity rangewide will, in particular, assist us in determining if the Mexican population meets the distinct vertebrate population segment criteria, or constitutes a significant portion of the range.

We request any additional information, comments, and suggestions from the public, governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, and any other interested parties concerning the status of this subspecies of the bobcat throughout its range in Mexico. We are seeking information regarding taxonomy, historic and current distribution, habitat use and habitat conditions, biology and ecology, ongoing conservation measures for the subspecies and its habitat, and threats to the subspecies and its habitat. We are

particularly interested in recent information on the taxonomy of the bobcat, and specifically whether *escuinapae* is a valid subspecies or whether it should be considered part of other subspecies. We also request any additional information that will support the DPS analysis of the discreteness and significance, as defined in our DPS policy (see Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment section above), of this Mexican population relative to the species as a whole.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments and materials concerning this finding to the Chief, Division of Scientific Authority (see ADDRESSES section). Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular office hours. Respondents may request that we withhold their identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name or address, you must state this request prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. To the extent consistent with applicable law, we will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

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Author

The primary author of this document is Karen L. Anderson of the Division of Scientific Authority (see **ADDRESSES** above).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: June 11, 2003.

Marshall P. Jones, Jr.,

Deputy Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 03–16725 Filed 7–1–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Environmental Assessment on Management of Mute Swans in the Atlantic Flyway

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that a Draft Environmental Assessment on the Management of Mute Swans in the Atlantic Flyway is available for public review. Comments and suggestions are requested.

DATES: You must submit comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment by July 16, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) can be obtained by writing to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Migratory Bird Management, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop MBSP–4107, Arlington, VA 22203. The DEA may also

be viewed on the Fish and Wildlife Service home page at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov>. Written comments can be sent to the address above, or emailed to MuteSwanEA@fws.gov. All comments must include the name and full mailing address of the person submitting the comments. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the public record. You may inspect comments during normal business hours at the address above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John L. Trapp, (703) 358–1965.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the DEA is to determine how to respond to applications for permits to take mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) under authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act for the purpose of minimizing the environmental damage that they can cause. The DEA (1) reviews the history, population status, and trends of mute swans in the Atlantic Flyway; (2) summarizes the history of mute swan population management; (3) assesses the effects of mute swans on wetland habitats, native species of fish and wildlife, and human interests; and (4) evaluates the need for continuing management of mute swans in the Atlantic Flyway to minimize environmental damage. Four alternatives, including the proposed action, are considered.

Steve Williams,

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 03–16699 Filed 7–1–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Mississippi River Basin Panel Meeting

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a meeting of the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force Mississippi River Basin Panel. The meeting topics are identified in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel will meet from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, July 10, 2003, and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2003, and a field trip from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel meeting will be held at the Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport,

3800 East 80th Street, Bloomington, MN 55425. Phone 952–854–2100.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jay Rendall, Mississippi River Basin Panel Chair and Exotic Species Program Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at 651–297–1464 or Sharon Gross, Executive Secretary, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force at 703–358–2308.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. I), this notice announces meetings of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel. The Task Force was established by the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990. The Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel was established by the ANS Task Force in 2002. The purpose of the Panel is to advise and make recommendations to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force on issues relating to the Mississippi River Basin region of the United States that includes thirty-two Mississippi River Basin States: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel will discuss several topics at this meeting including: aquatic invasive species (Asian carp, New Zealand mudsnail, round goby, water fleas, purple loosestrife, and Eurasian watermilfoil) in the Mississippi River Basin and their management; a discussion on pathways of invasive species spread and prevention methods used for the aquatic plant trade, recreational activities, and effective boater education programs; a discussion on prevention initiatives taken for the dispersal barrier and the summit in Chicago, 100th Meridian initiative, public awareness campaign, Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers, NAISA, and National Invasive Species Council's rapid response efforts; a discussion on Panel organization and operation and establishment of new Panel Committees for education, policy, control, research, and outreach efforts; and status and discussion of national legislation regarding aquatic invasive species.

Minutes of the meeting will be maintained by the Executive Secretary, Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, Suite 810, 4401 North Fairfax Drive,