

The Status of Rare,
Threatened, and Endangered
Plants and Animals of
California
2000-2004

California Department of Fish and Game
2005

State of California
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
Resources Agency
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State of California



The Resources Agency

2005 ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

The Mission of the Department of Fish and Game is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

California has the largest number of rare plants and animals of any state in the nation. Many of these species are at risk and are declining while others remain stable or are increasing. Loss of habitat, including habitat fragmentation, is the single, most important factor affecting the long-term survival of these species. Conservation of habitat and the natural processes that maintain habitat is central to protecting rare species now and into the future. The Department of Fish and Game (Department) mission statement underscores the responsibility to conserve and recover California's rare, threatened, and endangered species. Department activities today reflect a long history of conservation planning in California and are framed by California and federal law, including the California and Federal Endangered Species Acts (CESA, FESA), the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Department staff carries out research, management and monitoring programs, participate in recovery planning, and work cooperatively with the federal government, other State and local agencies, landowners, conservation groups, and the public in various ways to further conservation. The Department also focuses on conserving assemblages of species and habitats on a landscape level through locally-based cooperative conservation planning. Department biologists maintain information on plants and animals of special concern, and plan for conservation of these species in cooperative conservation plans and other conservation programs.



Daniel Burmester, DFG File Photo

CESA requires the Department to prepare a report summarizing the status of all State-listed endangered, threatened, and candidate species for the Commission, the Legislature, and the Governor. The 2005 report, "The Status of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants and Animals of California 2000-2004" updates information provided in the 2000 report. When the 2000 report was prepared, 293 species were listed as Rare, Threatened, or Endangered, and landscape-level conservation planning had been initiated in Southern California. Today, 302 species are listed by the State and conservation planning is now statewide.

This current report describes California's listed and candidate species, currently at 79 animals and 223 plants. Seven species have been listed since the 2000 report:

- **Ventura Marsh milk-vetch** (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*). **SE - April 2000.**
Thought to be extinct when rediscovered near Oxnard, Ventura County.
- **Baja California birdbush** (*Ornithostaphylos oppositifolia*). **SE - April 2001.**
Found only in extreme southern San Diego County.
- **San Fernando Valley spineflower** (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*). **SE - August 2001.**
Thought to be extinct when rediscovered on a ranch proposed for development in Ventura County. Now known from two populations, the second in Los Angeles County.
- **North Coast semaphore grass** (*Pleuropogon hooverianus*). **ST - August 2002.**
Uplisted from Rare. Populations in Marin, Sonoma, and Mendocino Counties. None are protected.
- **Orcutt's hazardia** (*Hazardia orcutti*). **ST - August 2002.**
Restricted in one population in San Diego County.



- **Scotts Valley polygonum** (*Polygonum hickmanii*). **SE - October 2004.**
First discovered in 1990. Found only in one site in Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz County.
- **Xantus's murrelet** (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*). **ST - December 2004.**
Breeding populations on Channel Islands are declining, threatened largely by native and non-native predators.

Large-scale conservation planning under the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act has expanded significantly since 2000. NCCP planning continues in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Diego counties. For the purposes of NCCP, the southern California coastal sage scrub ecosystem was divided into ecologically based subregions, and further divided into subareas that match local government jurisdictions. Each subregion and subarea is creating its own NCCP. Significant progress was made during 2000-2004 on the following plans:

- **City of Chula Vista Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plan, San Diego County.** The subarea plan will preserve approximately 9,243 acres and provide for the conservation of 86 species.
- **Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, Riverside County.** The plan area covers 1.2 million acres, a diverse mixture of 27 desert and mountain natural communities, and proposes coverage for 27 species.
- **Orange County Southern Subregional Plan.** The plan encompasses 57,000 acres of natural habitat including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, grassland, riparian, and oak woodlands.

- **Palos Verdes Peninsula Subregional Plan.** The plan addresses one state and federally-listed species, Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*).
- **San Diego Joint Water Agencies Subregional Plan.** The NCCP describes how four water agencies in San Diego County will manage their lands to conserve natural habitats and species while continuing to provide their mandated water services.
- **San Diego Multiple Habitat Conservation Program.** The subregional plan for the northwestern portion of San Diego County was approved on March 28, 2003. It encompasses 29,962 acres of natural habitat, and provides conservation for 77 species.
- **San Diego North County MSCP Subarea Plan.** The subarea plan will include grassland and vernal pool species in addition to many of the 85 species covered in the existing Multiple Species Conservation Plan.
- **Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).** The Riverside County integrates creation of an NCCP with an update of the County General Plan and a transportation corridor plan. The project area is 1.2 million acres and the proposed conservation area, including public lands, is approximately 500,000 acres.



Over the last four years, the NCCP program has expanded into Northern California. Planning efforts have begun in Contra Costa and Placer Counties, as well as with the Mendocino Redwoods Company. Plans are being considered in other northern California areas including Santa Clara, Solano, and Yolo Counties. Significant accomplishments in northern California include the following plans.



- **East Contra Costa County Plan.** The plan area covers 190,000 acres. Natural communities present include oak woodland, oak savannah, chaparral/scrub, riparian scrub and woodland, and permanent and seasonal wetlands.
- **Mendocino Redwood Company Plan.** The proposed plan will cover approximately 232,000 acres of private lands within the timber harvest zones of Mendocino and Sonoma Counties that the company currently owns or in which it holds timber rights.
- **Placer County Legacy.** The County is preparing the NCCP in three phases. Phase 1 is underway now and covers the valley floor and low foothill portions of the County. A Biological Working Group made up of area stakeholders meets regularly to discuss planning options and draft species accounts have been completed.

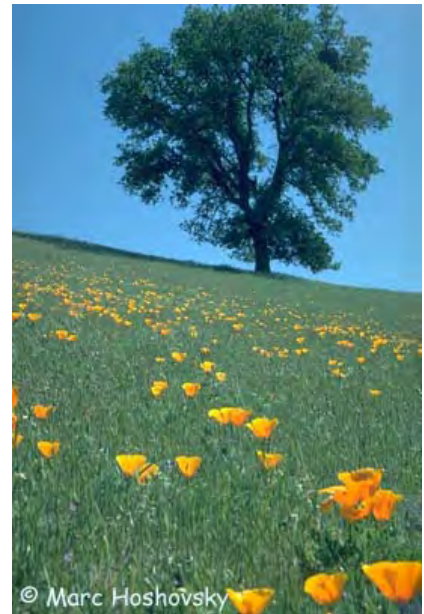


The Merced County and University of California at Merced Plan represents an opportunity lost. After no progress since the late summer of 2002, the County of Merced stopped preparation of the Merced Plan in early 2004, indicating that the issues were too controversial. The plan would have covered the eastern portion of the county near the town of Merced. The County of Merced and the University of California worked together on the initial stages of an NCCP plan that would have addressed conservation of grassland and vernal pool ecosystems while accommodating a new UC campus and additional growth and development in the adjacent urban areas.

As NCCPs have been approved in southern California, the Department, in cooperation with other resource agencies and the local jurisdictions, has turned its attention and resources to implementation tasks. Such tasks include habitat acquisition in cooperation with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and administering a Local Assistance Grants program. More than 30 Local Assistance Grants have been dispersed since 2000.

The Department is also working with WCB to purchase property suitable for the preservation, protection and restoration of wildlife habitat, as well as for recreation purposes. Many projects, large and small, are approved annually by the WCB. These projects benefit listed and sensitive species of plants and animals, protect watersheds, provide critical linkages between habitat areas, and help maintain open space. The WCB employs a number of different funding sources to acquire such lands.

In 2001, a new source of funds was made available to the Department. The USFWS Endangered Species Act Section 6 Recovery Land Acquisition Program provides grants to acquire habitat for the recovery of endangered and threatened species in support of USFWS approved Recovery Plans. Since this program began, the Department has received more than \$8,000,000 in Recovery Land Acquisition funds. Upon acquisition, these lands are held in perpetuity for the conservation, protection, and recovery of those species. Compatible recreational activities can be allowed on these Recovery Lands, as long as the recreational activities are not in conflict with the purposes for which the lands are acquired. Such activities can include wildlife viewing and nature walks.



Recent WCB acquisitions include:

- **Mill Creek Redwood Forest in Del Norte County.** The completed acquisition of 24,772 acres protects the watershed of Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park and is strategically located between Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area. Mill Creek supports healthy runs of coho salmon, chinook salmon, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat trout.
- **Wetlands protection and restoration projects in the San Francisco Bay Area** in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma Counties. Funds will be used for technical studies and marsh restoration; projects to improve water quality for

anadromous fish; restoration of tidal flows; restoration of natural spring-fed channels and riparian habitat; and for public outreach.

- **Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area, Bahia Wetlands Unit of Marin County.** The 645-acre acquisition supports blue oak woodland, salt marsh, and annual grasslands. The interface of blue oak woodland and salt marsh is unique. Numerous sensitive species are found on the property, including the federally-listed soft bird's-beak and endangered salt marsh harvest mouse, as well as the northern harrier, salt marsh yellowthroat, and San Pablo song sparrow.
- **Watsonville Slough Complex.** The WCB acquired 289 acres in Santa Cruz County in the upper watershed of Galighan Slough, one of the major sloughs and tributaries within the Watsonville Slough Complex. This acquisition provides habitat for a number of listed and sensitive species including the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and robust spineflower.
- **Morro Bay Dune Ecosystem in San Luis Obispo** The WCB has been instrumental in purchasing key parcels of property to protect portions of the dune ecosystem. These parcels total more than 400 acres and are key links in the Morro Bay Dunes Greenbelt, a community initiated effort to create a habitat and trail corridor connecting Montana de Oro State to Morro Bay State Park, as well as to other open space areas in the Morro Bay watershed.
- **Dressler Ranch in Mono County.** In 2003, the WCB completed acquisition of the Dressler Ranch which has been placed into a conservation easement that bars development and allows only normal cattle ranching operations. The property encompasses more than 6,000 acres that provides habitat for the sage grouse and protects more than 10 miles of riparian habitat.
- **Potrero Canyon in Riverside County.** Acquisition of Potrero Canyon represents an expansion of the Department's San Jacinto Wildlife Area by more than 8,500 acres and ensures connectivity between national forest land and other conserved areas in Riverside County's regional Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). Thirty-one threatened and endangered species, and species of special concern, occur on the site.



- **Rancho Jamul in San Diego County.** The acquisition of approximately 3,210 acres of land located in the Hollenbeck Canyon area of preserves critical habitat and wildlife corridors identified in the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Plan and provides a connection between the Department's Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve and Hollenbeck Canyon. It will eventually connect other wildlands with the Cleveland National Forest.

Conservation of sensitive species and habitats is also an intrinsic component of the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP), a joint project of the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Numerous conservation and restoration projects have been funded through the CVPCP. Research projects and studies are also an intrinsic part of this ecosystem-based program. Project Conservation of sensitive species and habitats is also an intrinsic component of the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP) is a joint project of the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).



Numerous conservation and restoration projects have been funded through the CVPCP. Research projects and studies are also an intrinsic part of this ecosystem-based program. Project partners include public and private entities such as the Department, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Shasta Land Conservancy. These projects benefit state and federally-listed species and their habitats. Species include the giant garter snake, riparian brush rabbit, Bakersfield cactus, and Keck's checkerbloom and such diverse habitats as vernal pools, Pine Hill chaparral, and native grasslands.

The Department has made significant progress in working with public and private entities to establish conservation banks throughout California. The established conservation banks protect numerous threatened and endangered animals and plants including the San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, valley elderberry long-horned beetle, coastal California gnatcatcher, Sebastopol meadowfoam, and slender Orcutt grass. More than 7,150 acres of habitat for threatened and endangered species have been conserved in conservation banks since 2000. The conservation banks range in size from as small as 28 acres to protect vernal pool plants and crustaceans to those as large as 3,200 acres for more wide-ranging species such as the San Joaquin kit fox. The approved conservation banks not only provide a viable alternative to the costly process of conventional project permitting and mitigation at a single site, but also contribute to large scale conservation planning efforts. Approved conservation banks include the Agua Fria Conservation Bank in western Merced County (San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, and burrowing owl); the Brushy Creek Conservation Bank in Alameda County (colonies of burrowing owl); and the Stillwater Plains Mitigation Bank in Shasta County (vernal pools and wetlands). Many more conservation banks, encompassing over 3,000 acres, are currently being reviewed as future conservation banks.

The 2005 report represents a new direction for the Department. Previous reports were disseminated as bound publications. The current report is being distributed on-line on the DFG website as well as by CD to increase public awareness of the status of sensitive species in California. Many dedicated biologists contributed information and text to this report and helped prepare the document in its electronic format. Many others kindly lent their images for use throughout the document or provided technical review. We wish to acknowledge their participation and thank them for their support and interest.