The Service was requested by the Department of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to list the Puerto Rican crested toad {Anaxyrus crested toad} as threatened and five snails and one clam taxon as severely limited in distribution and faces extinction threats recognized by the State on a spectrum from very highly vulnerable to moderately vulnerable.

The petitions, findings, supporting data, and comments are available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the Service’s Office of Endangered Species, Suite 500, 1000 North Glebe Road, Arlington, Virginia.

For further information contact:

Supplementary information:

Background

Section 4(b)(3)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended in 1982 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), requires that the Service make a finding on whether a petition to list, delist, or reclassify a species presents substantial scientific or commercial information to demonstrate that the petitioned action may be warranted. To the maximum extent practicable, this finding is to be made within 90 days of the receipt of the petition, and the finding is to be published promptly in the Federal Register. If the finding is positive, the Service is also required to promptly commence a review of the status of the involved species.

Section 4(b)(3)(B) of the Act, as amended, requires that, for any petition to revise the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants that contains substantial scientific or commercial information, a finding be made within 12 months of the date of receipt of the petition on whether the petitioned action is (a) not warranted, (b) warranted, or (c) warranted but precluded from immediate proposal by other pending proposals. Section 4(b)(3)(C) requires that petitions for which the action requested is found to be warranted but precluded should be treated as though resubmitted on the date of such finding, i.e., requiring a subsequent finding to be made within 12 months. Such 12-month findings are to be published promptly in the Federal Register.

Recently, the Service received and made 90-day findings on the following petitions:

The Service was petitioned by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to list eleven species of New Mexico molluscs. This petition was dated November 20, 1985, and was received by the Service on November 22, 1985. The petition contained information indicating that each of the 10 aquatic snail and one clam taxa is severely limited in distribution and faces extinction threats recognized by the State on a spectrum from very highly vulnerable to moderately vulnerable.

The five of the taxa are already under notice of review by the Service (49 FR 21064–21075, May 22, 1984); they are the Socorro spring snail (Fontinellicola neomexicana), the Chupadera spring snail (Fontinellicola sp.), the Roswell spring snail (Fontinellicola sp.), the Alamosa spring snail (Tryonia sp.), and the Pecos assiminea snail (Assiminea sp.). The other six species included in this petition for listing as threatened or endangered are: the Gila spring snail (Fontinellicola sp.), the New Mexico hot spring snail (Fontinellicola sp.), the Pecos spring snail (Fontinellicola sp.), the Koster’s spring snail (Tryonia sp.), the New Mexico ramshorn snail (Pecosorbi kansasensis), and the Sangre de Cristo pea-clam (Pisidium sp.). After reviewing this petition the Service finds that the petition does present substantial information indicating that the requested action may be warranted. This notice initiates a status review for the six species mentioned above that were not included in the Service’s May 22, 1984, Notice of Review.

Staff at the Service’s Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge has submitted a petition to add the Puerto Rican population of the white-checked pintail from Puerto Rico to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. The petition contains documentation that the species has undergone a serious decline islandwide since the 1950’s, from a former condition of being one of the most abundant waterfowl there. Habitat losses and illegal taking are suggested as causes for the decline. Available evidence indicates that the status of the duck is generally comparable to the three other waterfowl species now under petition from the Puerto Rican Department of Natural Resources for Federal listing. After reviewing this petition the Service finds that the petition does present substantial information that the requested action may be warranted. This notice initiates a status review for the white-checked pintail.

Recently, the Service made one-year findings for the following four petitions:

In a petition dated December 27, 1988, and received January 3, 1985, the Service was requested by the Department of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to list as threatened the following four species: Puerto Rican crested toad (Pelpophryne = Bupi) femur), Caribbean coot (Fulica
The Caribbean coot appears to prefer coastal lagoons. In southwest Puerto Rico in 1979 it was included on the List of Endangered Wildlife and Plants of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; but its rediscovery in 1988 was believed by some to be extinct. One sizeable breeding aggregation was found in 1984, in Guanica Commonwealth Forest. Additional information on size and distribution of populations has been very difficult to obtain. The available data suggest that most populations are near human development, but very hard to access prior to development impacts, and that breeding is irregular and concentrated; these factors make them susceptible to eradication. The species has been listed as endangered by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; but studies of its distribution and biology are continuing, and the degree of threat remains uncertain. However, the best scientific information available indicates that the Puerto Rican coot should be listed as threatened.

Prior to 1963, the Caribbean coot was reported to be abundant in Puerto Rico. By 1973, however, it had declined seriously enough to be included on a list of rare and endangered animals of the island. The Commonwealth closed hunting on this and the similar American coot (Fulica americana) in Puerto Rico in 1984. Major threats now appear to be illegal hunting and the destruction and modification of habitat. The Caribbean coot appears to prefer freshwater lakes, but may also be found in coastal lagoons. In southwest Puerto Rico, where the species used to be most abundant, agricultural development and drainage of Cartegena Lagoon between 1970 and 1980 have contributed significantly to its decline. The Department of Natural Resources estimates that about 200 birds remain in the Puerto Rican population, and lists it as threatened in its endangered species regulations of 1985.

The West Indian whistling duck has undergone a dramatic reduction in Puerto Rico after being reported as very common there prior to 1970. It was mentioned as "on the verge of being endangered" in the 1973 compilation of rare and endangered species of the island, and hunting was closed on it in 1975. The Commonwealth's endangered species regulations of 1985 list this species as threatened. Major threats are loss and modification of habitat and illegal hunting. The species prefers freshwater ponds, lakes, and reservoirs, but was present on only 5 out of 20 such sites in a Department of Natural Resources census in 1979. By 1979, Cartegena Lagoon, once considered to be the main breeding site for the species, but since largely drained and eutrophied, supported no West Indian whistling ducks. In 1982 and 1983 censuses the Puerto Rican population of this species was estimated at fewer than 500 birds.

In the case of each of the three waterfowl species, two important questions remain yet to be answered. First is the question of whether each one is a limited, definable population within the range. The Service will seek answers to these questions. Based on an analysis of available data the Service finds the actions requested by this petition to be warranted in respect to all six species. Immediate proposed rules to implement the requested actions are precluded by other pending proposals to revise the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

In a petition dated February 28, 1985, and received March 19, 1985, the Service was requested by Ms. Laura B. Aherns of Lionel, Sawyer and Collins, Attorneys for the City of Sparks and the City of Reno, to delist the population of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the main stem Truckee River and Pyramid Lake. An administrative finding that the action requested may be warranted and a review of status were announced in a Federal Register notice published on August 30, 1985 (50 FR 35272). The Service has completed a status review of all the information available regarding the biology, distribution, and threats to, this species. This review revealed that objectives of the Service's recovery plan to establish a number of self-sustaining populations have not been met. Threats identified in the recovery plan, including poor water quality, inadequate water during spawning periods, and the presence of introduced predators and competitors, have not yet been dealt with adequately. The sport fishery in Pyramid Lake, although extensive, is supported almost exclusively by hatchery production from
the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pyramid Lake Indian Tribe hatcheries. Although enhancement of the fishery through hatchery production is not being questioned, this enhancement has so far done little for recovery. The action requested by this petition is considered not warranted at this time on the basis of the best scientific information available.

In a petition from Ms. Joel L. Beardsley, Mariposa, RR 2 Box 441, Summerland Key, Florida 33042, dated April 11, 1985, and received by the Service on April 27, 1985, the Service was requested to determine endangered status for the Florida Keys marsh rabbit (Sylvilagus palustris hefneri). On June 14, 1985, the Service made a 90-day finding that the petition did present substantial information indicating that the requested action may be warranted. In the Federal Register of August 30, 1985 (50 FR 35272-35273), the Service published a notice announcing this finding and also a review of the status of the marsh rabbit.

This mammal, which was named and described in 1984, is known to occur only in a few locations in the lower (or western) Florida Keys. The petition contains documentation suggesting that the marsh rabbit's restricted habitat is jeopardized by development, and that it has become very scarce in recent years. Based on this review the Service finds that a determination of endangered status for the Florida Keys marsh rabbit is warranted, but precluded by other listing activity. Additional data will be gathered, and expeditious progress is being made in list other species that are considered to be of higher priority.

Section 4(b)(3)(B)(iii) of the Act states that petitioned actions may be found to be warranted but precluded by other listing actions when it is also found that the Service is making expeditious progress in revising the lists.

Expeditious progress in listing endangered and threatened species is being made, and is reported annually in the Federal Register. The most recent progress report was published on January 9, 1986 (51 FR 996).

The Service would appreciate any additional data, comments, and suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party concerning the species involved in the petitions listed above.

Author

This notice was prepared by Dr. James D. Williams, Office of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.