

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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MAJOR MOVE TO PROTECT THREE CLASSES OF ANIMALS: CRUSTACEANS, FISH, AND SNAILS

Forty-one taxa of crustaceans, fish, and snails in 13 States have been proposed for listing as threatened or endangered species by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Each taxonomy is a classification of the creatures according to their natural relationships.

The proposal was published in the January 12, 1977, Federal Register.

Public comments are invited through April 12, 1977. They should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Endangered Species, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The prohibitions of the Endangered Species Act will apply to all these animals, except for nine snail species which are listed as threatened. These nine, all occurring in large rivers and inaccessible, are to be protected by a prohibition against transplanting them outside their native range. For the 32 other species none may be imported, exported, or possessed or entered into commerce in any form without a special permit.

This action, if adopted finally, could have a significant impact on Federal actions in rivers, hammocks, islands, bays, and caves in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 obliges all agencies of the Federal Government to ensure that none of their authorized or funded actions adversely modifies the habitat of creatures listed as endangered or threatened.

In this action the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also proposed certain areas as critical habitat for 18 taxa. These include segments of rivers or creeks in California, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Indiana. The rivers and the States they flow through are listed below.

Alabama--Elk River, Flint River, and Cypress Creek.

California--Lagunitas Creek, Salmon Creek, and East Austin Creek.

Indiana--Blue River.

Kentucky--Tennessee River.

North Carolina--Little Tennessee River.

(over)

Tennessee--Duck River, Elk River, Nolichucky River, Clinch River, Collins River, Powell River, Stones River, Tennessee River, Holston River, Emory River, Flint River, Cypress Creek, and Buffalo River.

Virginia--Copper Creek, Clinch River, Powell River, and Holston River.

Snails are an indispensable part of the living world. Land snails are particularly significant in the life cycle of many bird species, and freshwater snails are important in the fish world's food chain.

Research on snails and crustaceans also has shown them to be remarkable organisms whose systems can produce a wide variety of poisons, antibiotics, anti-cancer agents, tranquilizers, antispasmodics, and antiseptic chemicals. Lodged in one place and restricted in food source and movements, the species that have survived to the present day are remarkable for their abilities to adapt to natural environmental changes such as fires or floods. They are not able to adapt to acid mine wastes, dredging, channelization, municipal wastes, soil runoff, pesticides, and other man-caused threats to their existence, however.

Of the 41 taxa proposed for listing, 13 are proposed as endangered and 28 as threatened. The endangered proposals involve species which are restricted to a very small area or those that occur in such small numbers as to be in immediate danger of extinction. The threatened proposals are species that occur over a wider range or in larger numbers and that face a less imminent threat over most of their range. Five fish, 21 snails, 8 crayfish, 4 shrimp, and 3 other crustaceans are included.

The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has notified the Governors of the States involved with respect to this proposal and has requested their comments and recommendations before making final determinations.

Also, comments particularly are sought concerning: (1) The existence of any living specimen of those species felt possibly to be extinct; (2) biological or other relevant data concerning any threat (or the lack thereof) to any species included on the list; (3) the location of and reasons why any habitat of any species named herein should be determined to be "critical habitat" as provided for by Section 7 of the Act; (4) improved scientific or common names for any species on the list; and (5) additional information concerning the range and distribution of any of these species.

The final regulations on these species will take into consideration the comments and any additional information received.

An environmental assessment has been prepared in conjunction with this proposal. It is on file in the Service's Office of Endangered Species, 1612 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240, and may be examined during regular business hours.

A determination will be made at the time of final rulemaking as to whether this is a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.