

Summary of the Assessment of Threatened and Endangered Species and the Species Selection Process to Identify Species-of-Concern and Species-of-Interest

Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands Land Management Plan

Updated July 2008

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1. Introduction

Under the 2008 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2008 Planning Rule) (USDA FS 2008a), the U.S.D.A. Forest Service is directed to include additional provisions for threatened and endangered species, species-of-concern, and species-of-interest if additional provisions in the plan components are needed to provide appropriate ecological conditions to support the diversity of these species in the plan area.¹ The Forest Service Handbook (FSH) directives state: “The Responsible Official should identify federally threatened and endangered species, species-of-concern², and species-of-interest³ whose ranges include the plan area.”⁴

To meet these requirements for the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (Grasslands) Land Management Plan (Plan), this summary document

1. identifies threatened and endangered species whose ranges include the Plan Area.⁵
2. describes the process used to identify the species-of-concern and species-of-interest.
3. lists the fish, plant and wildlife (amphibians, birds, mammals) species-of-concern and species-of-interest.
4. explains in narrative form how the Plan provides for species diversity, both in terms of plan components that contribute to maintaining sustainable populations of species-of-concern and plan components that are designed to provide for habitats of species-of-interest.

2. Threatened and Endangered Species

2.1. Plants

There are no listed threatened or endangered plant species whose ranges include the Plan Area.

¹ See 2008 Planning Rule; 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.10(b)(2) (USDA FS 2008a).

² Species-of-concern: species for which the Responsible Official determines that management actions may be necessary to prevent listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) FSH 1909.12, 43.22b; 36 CFR 219.10(b)(2)) (USDA FS 2006a).

³ Species-of-interest: species for which the Responsible Official determines that management actions may be necessary or desirable to achieve ecological or other multiple use objectives. (FSH 1909.12, 43.22c ; 36 CFR 219.10(b)(2)).

⁴ FSH 1909.12, 43.22

⁵ Plan Area: “The National Forest System lands covered by a plan” (36 CFR 219.16; FR p. 21512). The area within the Grasslands’ administrative boundaries that includes only those lands administered by the Forest Service, not state or private lands.

2.2. Wildlife

Table 1 lists the species identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) whose ranges may include the Plan Area and identifies their status as either threatened or endangered.

Table 1. Threatened and endangered species

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Arkansas River shiner	<i>Notropis girardi</i>	Threatened
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalis</i>	Delisted ⁶
Black-footed ferret	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	Endangered
Canada lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Threatened
Interior least tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	Endangered
Mexican spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Threatened
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	Endangered

These seven species were considered during the development of the fisheries and wildlife species diversity evaluations for the Plan,⁷ but were dismissed from further consideration; the rationale for dismissal, summarized by species below, is documented in the existing conditions reports for fisheries (USDA FS 2006a) and for wildlife (USDA FS 2005b).

Arkansas River shiner: This species, once common in the mainstem of the Cimarron River, declined markedly after 1964 because of habitat alteration and flow modification from stream dewatering or depletion, the construction of impoundments, water quality degradation, and competition from introduced species (USDI FWS 1998). Collections on the Grasslands in this drainage in 1965 and in 1998 disclosed no individuals (Kilgore and Rising 1965, Chynoweth 1998a).

Bald eagle: Because of a lack of suitable habitat, this species is not known or suspected to nest anywhere on the Grasslands (Chynoweth 1998b). Bald eagles are an uncommon winter resident on both Grasslands, where they likely feed on carrion, prairie dogs, rabbits, and squirrels (Andrews and Righter 1992, Cable and others, 1996). The bald

⁶ Although the bald eagle has been delisted as a threatened species under ESA, it remains on this list of species considered during Plan development because of post-delisting monitoring requirements under ESA section 4(g)(1). This program of monitoring required of the USFWS, in cooperation with States, continues for a minimum of 5 years for all species that have recovered and been delisted (USDI FWS 2007a).

⁷ 36 CFR 219.10 (b)(2); Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1921.76c.

eagle was delisted as a threatened species on August 8, 2007 (USDI FWS 2007a). However, the protections provided to the bald eagle under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712) continues to remain in place. The habitat provisions described in the Grasslands Plan for the Riparian and Aquatic Ecosystem address the habitat needs of wintering the bald eagle.

Black-footed ferret: Although the black-footed ferret is not considered to be extinct in southeastern Colorado (USDI FWS 2008a), surveys have yet to confirm the species' presence (Fitzgerald and others 1994). The black-footed ferret is considered extirpated in Kansas (Fitzgerald and others 1994, KDWP 1990, USDI FWS 2008a); the last confirmed record of a live (wild) ferret was in 1957 in Sheridan County (KDWP 1990). In December 2007, the USFWS released 24 captive-reared ferrets on private lands in northwest (Logan County) Kansas. This reintroduction project is expected to go on for five years, after which the USFWS will assess the success of the ferret's survival and reproduction and decide if the effort should continue to try and establish a self-sustaining wild population (USDI FWS 2007b).

Canada lynx: Because of lack of suitable habitat, this species is not known or suspected to inhabit the Grasslands. Lynx are found in Las Animas County, Colorado, in the Spanish Peaks area on the San Isabel National Forest (USDI FWS 2008b).

Interior least tern: There is no suitable habitat for this species on the Grasslands; the species has never been recorded on either Grassland.

Mexican spotted owl: This species may be found in Las Animas County, Colorado; however, it is not expected to occur and there are no records of occurrence in or near any portion of the Comanche National Grassland at any time of year (CNHP 2003, Andrews and Righter 1992; Gutierrez and others 1995). The species is not listed as occurring in Morton or Stevens Counties in Kansas.

Piping plover: This species breeds at a few large reservoirs near Lamar, Colorado. However, suitable habitat does not exist on the Grasslands; the species has never been recorded on the Comanche National Grassland. Only one record exists for this species in the Kansas portion of the Planning Area⁸; this was a migrant individual observed near the Elkhart sewer ponds in 1985 (Cable and others 1996).

Whooping crane: This species is a very rare migrant in eastern Colorado and western Kansas. They have not been recorded on the Grasslands (Andrews and Righter 1992, Cable and others 1996). Based on the 2007 (Kansas) and 2008 (Colorado) endangered, threatened, proposed and candidate species lists (USDI FWS 2007b and 2008). The whooping crane no longer is listed for the five counties in the Planning Area.

⁸ Planning Area: The area within the Grasslands administrative boundaries that includes Forest Service-administered lands (the Plan Area) and also private and state-owned and state-managed lands.

3. Process used to identify species-of-concern and species-of-interest

Before the availability of planning directives⁹ that pertain to the 2008 Planning Rule (USDA FS 2006a and 2006b), specialists on the revision interdisciplinary team prepared existing conditions reports for botany (USDA FS 2005c), fisheries (USDA FS 2005a), and wildlife (USDA FS 2005b). These reports include species-specific information about current conditions for fish, plants, and wildlife species in the Planning Area of interest for conservation or monitoring objectives. These reports were the starting point for developing the species-of-concern and species-of-interest lists.

3.1. Species-of-concern selection process

Species-of-concern are species for which the Responsible Official determines that management actions may be necessary to prevent listing under the ESA. Following the recommendations in FSH 1909.12, 43.22b, potential species-of-concern were:

1. Species identified as proposed and candidate species under the ESA.
2. Species with ranks of G-1 through G3 on the NatureServe ranking system.
3. Intraspecific (subspecific) taxa with ranks of T-1 through T-3 on the NatureServe ranking system.
4. Species that have been petitioned for federal listing and for which a positive “90-day finding” has been made (a 90-day finding is a preliminary finding that substantive information was provided indicating that the petition listing may be warranted and a full status review will be conducted), and
5. Species that have been recently delisted (these include species delisted within the past five years and other delisted species for which regulatory agency monitoring is still considered necessary).

The resulting species-of-concern list was then proposed to the Responsible Official for consideration and approval. Based on the criteria discussed above, a total of 14 species were identified for the species-of-concern list (Tables 2 and 3).

⁹ See FSH 1909.12, Chapter 40.

Table 2. Bird, fish, mammal, and reptile species-of-concern, with rationale

	Species common name	Scientific name	ESA proposed?	ESA petitioned?	NatureServe ranking	FSH 1909.12, 43.22b condition ¹⁰
Bird species						
1	Lesser prairie chicken	<i>Tympanuchus pallidicinctus</i>	No	Yes	G3	1, 2
2	Mountain plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	No	No	G2	2
Fish species						
1	Arkansas darter	<i>Etheostoma cragini</i>	Yes	Yes	G3	1, 2
Mammal species						
1	Black-tailed prairie dog	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	No	Yes	G3G4	2
2	Swift fox	<i>Vulpes velox</i>	No	No	G3	2
Reptile species						
1	Massasauga rattlesnake	<i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>	No	No	G3G4	2, 3
2	Triploid Colorado checkered whiptail	<i>Aspidoscelis neotesselata</i>	No	No	G2	2, 3

¹⁰ Numbers in this column refer to items 1–5 in the preceding section, “Species-of-concern selection process.”

Table 3. Plant species-of-concern, with rationale

	Species common name	Scientific name	ESA proposed?	ESA petitioned?	NatureServe ranking	FSH 1909.12, 43.22b condition ¹¹
1	Andean prairie clover	<i>Dalea cylindriceps</i>	No	No	G3G4	1, 2
2	Colorado frasera	<i>Frasera coloradensis</i>	No	No	G3	1, 2
3	Colorado Springs evening primrose	<i>Oenothera harringtonii</i>	No	No	G2	2
4	Raven Ridge false goldenweed	<i>Oenopsis foliosa</i> var. <i>monocephala</i>	No	No	G2G3T2	1, 2, 3
5	Rocky Mountain bladderpod	<i>Lesquerella calcicola</i>	No	No	G2	2
6	Sandhill goosefoot	<i>Chenopodium cycloides</i>	No	No	G3G4	1, 2
7	Wheel milkweed	<i>Asclepias uncialis</i> spp. <i>uncialis</i>	No	No	G3G4T2T3	2, 3

¹¹ Numbers in this column refer to items 1–5 in the preceding section, “Species-of-Concern Selection Process.”

3.2. Species-of-interest selection process

Species-of-interest are species for which the Responsible Official determines that management actions may be necessary or desirable to achieve ecological or other multiple use objectives (FSH 1909.12, 43.22c).

The following six potential sources of species to be considered for the species-of-interest list are listed in FSH 1909.12,43.22c:

1. Species with ranks of S-1, S-2, N1, or N2 on the NatureServe ranking system.
2. State-listed threatened and endangered species that do not meet the criteria as species-of-concern.
3. Species identified as species of conservation concern in State Comprehensive Wildlife Strategies.
4. Bird species on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern National Priority list.
5. Additional species that valid existing information indicates are of regional or local conservation concern due to factors that may include:
 - a. Significant threats to populations or habitat.
 - b. Declining trends in populations or habitat.
 - c. Rarity.
 - d. Restricted ranges (for example, narrow endemics, disjunct populations, or species at the edge of their range).
6. Species that are hunted or fished and other species of public interest. Invasive species may also be considered. [Items a-i for number 6 are listed below.]

The first five sources listed above were evaluated during the development of the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (RFSS) list for the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service (USDA FS 2003). Therefore, we used the RFSS list and a consideration of hunted, fished and invasive species to identify species to consider for the species-of-interest list for the Grasslands.

After identifying a list of possible species-of-interest on the basis of the six criteria above, the following factors were considered when determining the final species-of-interest list (FSH 1909.12, 43.22c). The presence of one or more of the nine factors taken from FSH 1909.12 would suggest, but not compel, that a species be included as a species-of-interest (FSH 1909.12, 43.22c, number 6):

- a. Species habitat or population has declined significantly in the plan area.
- b. Species and its habitats are not well-distributed in the plan area.
- c. Species population numbers are low in the plan area.
- d. Species is dependent on a specialized and/or limited habitat in the plan area.
- e. Species is subject to some imminent threat (for example, invasion of exotic species into habitat or disturbance due to road systems).
- f. Species habitat or population is not generally secure within its range and NFS lands act as an important refuge.
- g. Species is of public interest, including those species identified cooperatively with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies consistent with the Sikes Act.

- h. Species is invasive.
- i. Species poses a threat to ecosystem or species diversity.

Considerations a–f were evaluated during the development of the RFSS list for the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service (USDA FS 2003), hence we again relied on the RFSS list, combined with hunted, fished and invasive species in determination of the species-of-interest list. Potential species were screened to identify those for which the planning area supports known populations or for which the Planning Area has the potential to provide one or more key components of a species’ habitat. The resulting proposed species-of-interest list was then recommended to the Responsible Official for consideration and approval.

A large pool of potential species was considered in the species-of-interest evaluation. The Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service originally identified and examined 1,011 species for the RFSS list (USDA FS 2003). Of those selected for the RFSS list, a total of 29 species were examined for the Grasslands species-of-interest list due the possibility of their occurrence in the Planning Area (USDA FS 2006c, USDA FS 2006d, USDA FS 2008b). In addition, two bryophyte species were examined for the species-of-interest list based on the criteria discussed above (USDA 2006d). An additional five game species and one nonnative invasive plant species were considered for the species-of-interest list. Based on the evaluations conducted for these fish, plants, and wildlife species, a total of 18 species were recommended for the species-of-interest list (see Tables 5–7).

Rationale for identifying species-of-interest, listed in the far-right column of Tables 5–7 refers to the following:

- a.** FSH 1909.12 Chapter 43.22. Species is currently listed on the RFSS list, which includes an evaluation of species from the following sources:
 - 1. Species with ranks of S-1, S-2, N1, or N2 on the NatureServe ranking system.
 - 2. State listed threatened and endangered species that do not meet the criteria as species-of-concern.
 - 3. Species identified as species of conservation concern in State Comprehensive Wildlife Strategies.
 - 4. Bird species on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern National Priority list.
 - 5. Additional species that valid existing information indicates are of regional or local conservation concern.
- b.** FSH 1909.12 Chapter 43.22c(6). Species that are hunted or fished and other species of public interest. Invasive species may also be considered.

Table 5. Bird species-of-interest, with rationale

T=Threatened, E=Endangered, SC=State special concern, SINC = Species in need of conservation

	Species	Scientific name	Nature Serve ranking	On state T&E list?	Colorado Natural Heritage Program concern?	Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory concern?	FSH 1909.12, 43.22c condition ¹²
1	Brewer's sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	G5	No	S4	S1	a
2	Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	G4	CO-T	S4	S3	a
3	Cassin's sparrow	<i>Aimophila cassinii</i>	G5	No	S4	S3	a
4	Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	G4	KS – SINC CO – SC	S3	S2	a
5	Grasshopper sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	G5	No	S3	S4	a
6	Lewis' woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	G4	No	S4	NA	a
7	Loggerhead shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	G4	No	S3	S4	a
8	Long-billed curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	G5	KS – SINC CO – SC	S2	S1	a
9	Northern bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	G5	No	S4	S5	b
10	Northern harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	G5	No	S3	S2	a
11	Scaled quail	<i>Callipepla squamata</i>	G5	No	S4	S2	b
12	Wild turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	G5	No	S5	S5	b

¹² Letters in this column refer to items a. (1–5) and b. described at the end of the preceding section, “Species-of-interest selection process.”

	Species	Scientific name	Nature Serve ranking	On state T&E list?	Colorado Natural Heritage Program concern?	Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory concern?	FSH 1909.12, 43.22c condition ¹²
13	Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	G5	No	S3	S5	a

Table 6. Amphibian and mammal species-of-interest, with rationale

T=Threatened, E=Endangered, SC=State special concern, SINC = Species in need of conservation

	Common name	Scientific name	Nature Serve ranking	On a state T&E list?	Colorado Natural Heritage Program concern?	Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory concern?	FSH 1909.12, 43.22c condition ¹³
Amphibian species							
1	Green toad	<i>Bufo debilis</i>	G5	KS – T	S2	S2	a
2	Plains leopard frog	<i>Rana blairi</i>	G5	No	S3	S5	a
Mammal species							
1	Elk	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	G5	No	S5	S1	b
2	Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	G5	No	S4	S2	b

¹³ Letters in this column refer to items a. (1–5) and b. described at the end of the preceding section, “Species-of-interest selection process.”

Table 7. Plant species-of-interest, with rationale

T=Threatened, E=Endangered, SC=State special concern, SINC = Species in need of conservation

	Common name	Scientific name	Nature Serve ranking	On a state T&E list?	Colorado Natural Heritage Program concern?	Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory concern?	FSH 1909.12, 43.22c condition¹⁴
1	Tamarisk	<i>Tamarix ramosissima</i>	NR	No	NR	NR	b

¹⁴ Letters in this column refer to items a. (1–5) and b. described at the end of the preceding section, “Species-of-Interest Selection Process.”

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