



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Service Proposes Critical Habitat Designation or Revision for Nine Invertebrates Found in Bexar County, Texas

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will announce on Tuesday, February 22, 2011, a proposal to revise critical habitat designation for nine invertebrates under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The proposed critical habitat is located in Bexar County, Texas. In total, approximately 6,906 acres (ac) (2,795 hectares (ha)) are being proposed for revised or designated critical habitat. Publication of this proposal in the *Federal Register* begins a 60-day public comment period.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

The nine species for which the Service is proposing to designate critical habitat or to revise critical habitat are collectively known as the nine Bexar County invertebrates. They are *Rhadine exilis* (ground beetle, no common name); *Rhadine infernalis* (ground beetle, no common name); Helotes mold beetle (*Batrisodes venyivi*); Cokendolpher Cave harvestman (*Texella cokendolpheri*); Robber Baron Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina baronia*); Madla Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina madla*); Braken Bat Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina venii*); the Government Canyon Bat Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina vespera*); and Government Canyon Bat Cave spider (*Neoleptoneta microps*).

These invertebrates inhabit caves or other features known as "karst." The term karst refers to a type of terrain that is formed by the slow dissolution of calcium carbonate from limestone bedrock by mildly acidic groundwater. This process creates numerous cave openings, cracks, fissures, fractures, and sinkholes, and the bedrock resembles Swiss cheese. All of these species are subterranean-dwelling, non-aquatic species of local distribution in north and northwest Bexar

County, Texas. They spend their entire lives underground, but surface features are very important as they provide links to drainage and pathways for nutrients to enter the caves.

The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, other concerned government agencies, the scientific community, industry, or other interested parties concerning this proposed rule.

We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before April 25, 2011. We must receive requests for public hearings, in writing, at the address shown in the **ADDRESSES** section by April 8, 2011.

For more information on this proposal, what to comment on, or how to submit comments, see the *Federal Register* notice on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest>. The proposal will be available on our web site on Tuesday, February 22, 2011.

For further information contact Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758; by telephone at 512-490-0057 x248; or by facsimile at 512-490-0974. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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