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# U.S. Proposes Protecting 7 Penguin Species

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WASHINGTON (AP) Seven penguin species have reason to have happy feet: The Bush administration is moving to protect them. But three other types of penguin including the stars of recent movies got the cold shoulder.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to list six species of penguin as threatened species and one the African penguin as an endangered species.

But it has denied protection under the 1973 Endangered Species Act for three others including the emperor and northern rockhopper penguins, the stars of such popular movies as “March of the Penguins” and “Happy Feet.”

The penguins live far from the U.S., in places like Antarctica, South Africa, Peru, Argentina and New Zealand so the protections of U.S. endangered species law are limited, officials said. But listing the penguins under the act will raise awareness about the species and could give the U.S. leverage in international negotiations to protect them from fishing, habitat loss, development and other threats.

Environmentalists hailed the Bush administration’s proposal to fully list six penguin species, but criticized its decision not to protect three others, including the emperor penguin, the largest penguin in the world and one that depends on sea ice for breeding and feeding.

Endangered species advocates also faulted the government for protecting a seventh species the southern rockhopper penguin in only a small part of its range.

“Penguin populations are in jeopardy, and we can’t afford to further delay protections,” said Brendan Cummings, the oceans program director for the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity, which requested in November 2006 that the administration protect a dozen penguin species.

The government decided in July that there wasn’t enough information to do a review of two of the 12 species for which protection was sought.

The decision to protect seven is still open for public comment so the Obama administration will make the final determination on them. For the others, any action to alter the Bush decision would require an entirely new review.

The administration said that there was not enough evidence to list the emperor as threatened because of global warming now or in the foreseeable future, although research has predicted that increasing temperatures could melt ice in Antarctica and also diminish populations of the penguin’s preferred food such as krill.

About 390,000 emperor penguins live in 47 colonies in Antarctica. But while the populations of many penguin species are high, recent research has shown that about a dozen species are in decline because

of numerous stresses, including climate change.

The other species not getting protection include the northern rockhopper penguin and the macaroni penguin.

“There are certainly issues with those species, but we did not believe at this time that the populations were reduced or that there were significant threats to lead us to make a determination that they are threatened with extinction,” said Kenneth Stansell, deputy director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in an interview.

Earlier this year the Bush administration listed the polar bear as a threatened species, the first to be protected because of the threats of global warming. But the administration has also finalized regulations to ensure that the law is not used to block projects that contribute to global warming.

The Fish and Wildlife Service was under a court-ordered deadline to make decisions about the penguins by Thursday.

Scientists believe there are at least 16 and perhaps up to 19 penguin species, depending on whether some are categorized as subspecies.

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