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Push to protect snails, slugs

Move over, spotted owl, and make way for the keeled jumping slug.

Environmentalists want to make a collection of snails and slugs the new poster creatures for saving the Northwest's old-growth forests.

A coalition of five environmental groups on Thursday announced it is asking the federal government to give Endangered Species Act protections to 32 species of slugs and snails found primarily in old growth.

That includes the tiny keeled jumping slug, found chiefly on the Olympic Peninsula, which can flip itself off leaves when startled.

"These underappreciated species perform many ecological services for humans, but without the effective protection of the Endangered Species Act they are likely to become extinct," Tierra Curry, a biologist for one of the environmental groups, said in a news release.