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## Small snake found in AZ denied federal protection

Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — A small snake with a shovel-nosed snout warrants federal protection, but U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials say other species are a higher priority.

The agency announced Tuesday that the Tucson shovel-nosed snake will be added to the list of species eligible for protection under the Endangered Species Act, promoting conservation efforts. But the snake found primarily in desert areas in south-central Arizona won't receive statutory protection.

The Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity criticized the decision, saying extensive urban and agricultural sprawl have threatened the survival of the rarely seen snake.

The group contends that the delay in listing the snake and 251 other species as endangered is illegal.