
The Oregonian

Oregon spotted frog hops to the front of the line under proposal for endangered species protection



Spock, an Oregon spotted frog, resting for a standard identification photo at the Oregon Zoo. Photo by Michael Durham and Melinda Holland. (Oregon Zoo/Michael Durham and Melinda Holland)

By Stuart Tomlinson

Under a proposal released Wednesday by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Oregon spotted frog would receive endangered species protection. The proposal, officials said, comes as part of settlement with the Center for Biological Diversity to speed protection of 757 species.

The proposal would include the designation of 68,000 acres and 24 stream miles as protected “critical habitat.”

The frogs, said Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity, were once abundant from British Columbia to California, but have disappeared from 90 percent of their former range due to wetland habitat destruction

View full sizeAdults frogs are no larger than the palm of your hand and range in size from about 1.75 inches to 4 inches in body length. Adult males average 2.25 inches and adult females average 3 inches. This undated file photo shows a female Oregon spotted frog from the Owyhee Mountains of Southwestern Idaho.AP Photo/Boise State University, Janice Engle

“Oregon spotted frogs have been closing in on extinction for over 20 years,” Greenwald, the endangered species director with the center, said. “Now finally they’re being thrown a lifeline, and it’s a huge relief.”

Greenwald said the frog is threatened by “habitat loss, disease, introduced fish and contaminants, and in particular has suffered from the massive loss of wetlands next to rivers and streams.”

In all, 14 critical habitat units are under consideration for the frog, including sites in the Chilliwack, Nooksack, Samish, Black and White Salmon watersheds in Washington and the Deschutes, Little Deschutes, McKenzie, Willamette, Williamson and Klamath watersheds in Oregon.

“Protecting the Oregon spotted frog will have real benefits for people because the wetland habitats needed by the frog prevent flooding, clean our water and provide habitat for a wide diversity of fish and wildlife,” Greenwald said in a press release.

“The calls of spotted frogs sound like woodpeckers, though they’re often delivered underwater. And they’re just as much a part of our Pacific Northwest heritage as the bugling of Roosevelt elk or the hooting of spotted owls. It would be heartbreaking if those calls went silent.”

The protection has been a long time coming, Greenwald said.

The amphibian was first recognized as a candidate for Endangered Species Act protection in 1991. In 2011, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the center agreed to speed protections not only for the frog, but for another 756 species.

Under the agreement, 103 species have received protection, with another 60 under consideration.



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