

Finding a fish like Nemo is getting more difficult.

by The Wisconsin Gazette
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So the orange clownfish — the species popularized by the movie “Finding Nemo” — may warrant protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The National Marine Fisheries Service made the announcement this week, following a request for consideration citing threats from global warming and ocean acidification.

Next for the service: to conduct a status review of the species.

The government agency announced the pending review in response to a 2012 petition from the Center for Biological Diversity that proposed endangered species protections for eight reef fish — the orange clownfish and seven species of damselfish.

Protections would minimize the impact of actions that could harm the fish and their coral reef habitat.

Protections also could help spur reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from federal projects.



An orange clownfish. — PHOTO: G.R. Allen

“Endangered Species Act protection and meaningful action to put the brakes on greenhouse gas pollution will help make sure these beautiful fish survive in the wild and not just in the movies,” stated Shaye Wolfe, climate science director at the CBD.

The orange clownfish, which inhabits the Coral Triangle in the tropical Indo-Pacific, spends nearly its entire life protected within anemones on coral reefs, according to the CBD, which says climate change and increasing ocean acidity threaten the habitat and the fish.

The orange clownfish also faces threats from the marine aquarium trade — the U.S. is the world’s largest importer of ornamental marine fish, such as clownfish.

“The longer we wait to provide Endangered Species Act protection ... the harder it’s going to be to save these unique creatures,” Wolf said.

While the government will review the status of the clownfish, it denied status reviews of six damselfish and has yet to decide whether to review the yellow damselfish found in Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.