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ENDANGERED SPECIES

Greens seek protection for American bumblebee

Michael Doyle, E&E News reporter Published: Monday, February 1, 2021



An American bumblebee on a coneflower. Adam Jones/Danita Delimont Photography/Newscom

Environmental groups today sought Endangered Species Act protections for the American bumblebee, noting a serious population decline some estimate at 89% over the past two decades.

"We're asking President Biden to be the hero that steps up and saves the American bumblebee from extinction," said Jess Tyler, a staff scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's unthinkable that we would carelessly allow this fuzzy, black-and-yellow beauty to disappear forever."

The organization joined with the Bombus Pollinator Association of Law Students of Albany Law School in filing the [petition](#) with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The petition reports that "in the last 20 years, the American bumble bee has vanished from at least eight states, mostly in the Northeast, and it is in precipitous decline" elsewhere.

"Once the most commonly observed bumble bee in the United States, the American bumble bee ... continues to decline toward extinction due to the disastrous, synergistic impacts of threats including habitat loss, pesticides, disease, climate change ... and loss of genetic diversity," the petition states.

Urged along by litigation, the Fish and Wildlife Service previously listed a distinct species, the rusty patched bumblebee, as endangered in 2017.

Once common throughout the midwestern and northeastern United States, the rusty patched bumblebee has since vanished from 87% of the counties it formerly inhabited. Habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change and disease have all been identified as threats to its continued existence ([*Greenwire*](#), Aug. 31, 2020).

"It is highly unlikely that any one threat has acted to precipitate the decline of the American bumble bee, rather a combination of factors creates conditions that amplify impacts," the new petition states.

The Trump administration proposed listing the Franklin's bumblebee.

According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, the species is "thought to have the most limited distribution of all known North American bumble bee species ... and one of the most limited geographic distributions of any bumble bee in the world.