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# Conservation Group to Sue Trump Officials and Agency Over Delayed Protections for 11 Species

*The Center for Biological Diversity points out that Trump's presidency "is coming to an end with the worst record protecting species of any administration since the Endangered Species Act was passed."*

by

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With just over two weeks until President Donald Trump leaves office, the Center for Biological Diversity on Tuesday launched a lawsuit over the delay of federal protections for several species, including the [imperiled](#) monarch butterfly, and blasted the outgoing administration's record on at-risk animals, plants, and habitats.

In a statement announcing the suit, the conservation group [said](#) that Trump's presidency "is coming to an end with the worst record protecting species of any administration since the Endangered Species Act was passed." The group is accusing two Trump appointees and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), a division of the Interior Department, of violating the ESA by placing 11 species on a candidate list rather than providing them with protections under the 1973 law.

Along with the monarch, the center is focusing on the [eastern gopher tortoise](#), Peñasco least chipmunk, longfin smelt, Colorado Delta clam, three Texas mussels, magnificent ramshorn snail, bracted twistflower, and [northern spotted owl](#). The group sent the requisite 60-day [notice](#) (pdf) of its planned suit to outgoing Interior Secretary Bernhardt and USFWS Director Aurelia Skipwith.

"To date, the Trump administration has listed only 25 species or just six species per year, the lowest rate of any administration since the act was passed," the group notes. "Such a low rate of listing clearly does not constitute expeditious progress and undermines any claim by the

administration that the 11 species included in this notice are precluded by higher priority listing actions."

The center adds:

For comparison, an average of 45 and 65 species per year were listed by the Obama and Clinton administrations, respectively. Given there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of imperiled species in the U.S. that need protection under the ESA to avoid extinction, including more than 500 petitioned species awaiting 12-month findings from the service, there is no explanation for the very small number of species that received protection in the last two years.

"The Trump administration's undermining of the Endangered Species Act puts the monarch butterfly, eastern gopher tortoise, and hundreds more plants and animals at risk of extinction," said Noah Greenwald, the center's endangered species director.

As *Common Dreams* [reported](#) last month, the Trump administration's decision to only declare the monarch butterfly a "candidate" for threatened or endangered species status, even though the insect's numbers have dropped by 90% in recent decades, sparked a flood of condemnation from conservation groups.

In February, the center filed a [lawsuit](#) (pdf) in the U.S. District Court for Washington, D.C. over the Trump administration's failure to decide whether to list 241 species.

The group said Tuesday that it also "plans to initiate lawsuits for another nine species waiting for listing and 89 species waiting for designation of critical habitat. It hopes to work out a schedule with the Biden administration to ensure these species get protection and avoid extinction."

Greenwald, who signed the group's notice for the 11 species, emphasized the importance of President-elect Joe Biden's administration paving a new path.

"For newly nominated Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to successfully save these species from extinction, it will require more money for endangered species, new leadership at the Fish and Wildlife Service, and a renewed commitment to science and following the law," he said.

Environmental and Indigenous groups have [celebrated](#) Biden's selection of Haaland, a Democratic congresswoman from New Mexico, to be his secretary of the interior. However, party control of the Senate—which must confirm the president-elect's Cabinet members—will be determined by two runoff elections in Georgia on Tuesday.