THREE CALIFORNIA PLANTS LISTED AS ENDANGERED

Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed three California plants as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. A species is designated as endangered when it is at risk of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Keck’s checker-mallow (*Sidalcea keckii*), Kneeland Prairie penny-cress (*Thlaspi californicum*), and Yreka phlox (*Phlox hirsuta*) are all endemic to California and grow on serpentine soils. Serpentine, California’s official state rock, breaks down into unusual soils that are high in magnesium and low in calcium, a mixture that is toxic to most plants, but can produce unique plant communities. These soils support more than 200 species of California native plants.

The Keck’s checker-mallow is an annual herb in the mallow family that grows in sparsely-vegetated grasslands at elevations from 400 to 1,400 feet in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The plant displays deep pink flowers from April through May and can grow to a height of 13 inches. Fewer than 300 of the plants remain, all in Fresno and Tulare counties. For more than 50 years, biologists believed Keck’s checker-mallow was extinct because it had disappeared from its historic locations near the White River in Tulare County and Piedra in Fresno County. In 1992, however, consultants conducting a site survey for a subdivision discovered a population of 60 plants in Tulare County. Another population of 216 plants was found in Fresno County in 1998. Together, these two populations occupy a total of about three acres on both private and Federal lands.

Kneeland Prairie penny-cress is a small plant found only in Humboldt County, California. Service botanists know of only one location where this plant still exists — on clay soil outcrops in coastal prairie near Kneeland Airport, some 11 miles east of Eureka. This population of roughly 11,000 plants grows over a half-acre area on private land next to the airport. The airport itself has bisected this population of plants into two colonies. Kneeland Prairie penny-cress is an herb in the mustard family, with toothed leaves. The plant can reach a height of from 3-6 inches. It displays white flowers from May to June.

The Yreka phlox, a perennial in the phlox family, produces pink to purple flowers from April to June. Plants can grow from two to almost six inches tall. It is found only in Siskiyou County near the city of Yreka growing at elevations ranging from 2,800 to 4,400 feet in association with Jeffrey pine, incense cedar, and juniper. Botanists know of only two locations totaling less than 300 acres where it still exists. One population of Yreka phlox occurs on property owned by the City of Yreka and private landowners. The other grows in an area of mixed ownership, including the U.S. Forest Service’s Klamath National Forest, a Caltrans right-of-way, and private land.

The primary threats to these plants are agricultural land conversion, urbanization, and risk of extinction from naturally occurring random events such as fire, insect predation, and disease. According to the World Conservation Union, one in every eight plant species in the world faces extinction from habitat loss and competition from non-native species. In California alone, 169 plant species are either Federally listed threatened or endangered.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PRESS

Smithsonian Institution Press publishes and distributes scholarly, semipopular, and general-interest books within fields that reflect the research and collections strengths of the Institution. Among these are books on conservation, biodiversity, natural history, ecology and evolutionary
future meetings

November 2-3. Restoring the Rockies: Restoration and Conservation Strategies in the West. The Central Rockies Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration announces the first call for papers for the society’s first two-day conference to be held in Keystone, Colorado. The society is accepting abstracts for paper and poster proposals pertaining to all areas of restoration, with some emphasis on riparian areas, rangeland restoration, restoration on private lands, restoration education, restoration in right-of-ways, and urban restoration. Proposals are welcome from all disciplines, backgrounds, and experience levels. Submission deadline for the first call is May 1, though proposals may be accepted past that time on a space-available basis. Abstracts may be submitted by email to: taskerl@rmi.net, nelsonj@exponent.com, or by hard copy or disk to Central Rockies Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, PO Box 17644, Boulder, CO 80304-0644. Contact Lisa Tasker at taskerl@rmi.net or (970) 923-3069 for more information.

February 19-23, 2001. Eradication of Island Invasives: Practical Actions and Results Achieved. The Invasive Species Specialist Group of IUCN will hold an international conference at the University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. Papers presented and discussion sessions will be strictly limited to the subject of: “Eradication of invasive species from islands; methods used and the results achieved.” The term “eradicating” may include work to remove invasive species where complete eradication is some, or many, years away but the methods used to date are achieving positive results or providing a significant learning experience. The term “island” may include true islands, natural habitat islands, remnant and artificial habitat islands, or new invasions of natural ecosystems where eradication was deemed feasible. Preference will be given to papers that provide detail of the techniques used or of the ecosystem response to the work. Presentation titles are requested by June 15, and the deadline for the receipt of abstracts is October 1. Registration will open on July 1 and forms will be available on the website at http://www.issg.org, or by contacting the Conference Manager: Mr Dick Veitch, 48 Manse Road, Papakura, New Zealand; Tel & Fax: +64-9-298 5775; Email: dveitch@kiwilink.co.nz.

new publications

The Biodiversity Support Program’s (BSP) Latin America and Caribbean program is proud to announce the release
In Africa parks cover an area four times the size of Spain. Worldwide, parks, designed to be natural safe havens, cover an area as large as Antarctica. Though their size looks impressive, low funding from cash-strapped governments and the demand for land for economic development means that many protected areas are ‘paper parks’, unable to protect nature. Funded by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Development, the newly published book Parks for Biodiversity looks at what will be required if protected areas are to be successful in the next century. Written for both policy makers and field practitioners, the publication reviews the current status of protected areas in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It analyses how parks contribute to development in each region and what action is needed by governments and international donors to secure their future. The work was carried out by IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas, which is a network of some 1,300 protected area professionals around the world. The book is available for $24.75 USD / £16.50 GBP plus postage from IUCN Publications Services Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 ODL, United Kingdom; Tel: 0044 1223 277894; Fax: 0044 1223 277175; E-mail: info@books.iucn.org; or visit http://iucn.org/bookstore/index.html.


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