



**Montana Natural Heritage Program**  
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## Species Status Codes

Provided below are definitions for species conservation status ranks, categories and other codes designated by MTNHP, Federal and State Agencies and non-governmental organizations.

- Montana Species of Concern
- Montana Potential Species of Concern
- Status Under Review
- Exotic Species
- Montana Species Ranking Codes
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Conservation Need
- Partners In Flight (PIF)
- Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) Threat Category

### Species of Concern

Species of Concern are native taxa that are at-risk due to declining population trends, threats to their habitats, restricted distribution, and/or other factors. Designation as a Montana Species of Concern or Potential Species of Concern is based on the Montana Status Rank, and is not a statutory or regulatory classification. Rather, these designations provide information that helps resource managers make proactive decisions regarding species conservation and data collection priorities. See the latest Species of Concern Reports for more detailed explanations and assessment criteria.

### Potential Species of Concern

Potential Species of Concern are native taxa for which current, often limited, information suggests potential vulnerability. Also included are animal species which additional data are needed before an accurate status assessment can be made.

### Status Under Review

Species designated "Status Under Review" are plant species that require additional information and currently do not have a status rank but may warrant future consideration as Species of Concern. This category also includes plant species whose status rank is questionable due to the availability of new information or the availability of conflicting or ambiguous information or data. Species listed in this category will be reviewed periodically or as new information becomes available.

### Exotic Species

Exotic species are not native to Montana, but have either been reported in Montana or have established populations in Montana outside of their native range.

### Montana Species Ranking Codes

Montana employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (G) and state (S) status (NatureServe 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks - the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, life history traits and threats.

For example, Clustered lady's slipper (*Cypripedium fasciculatum*) is ranked G4 S2. Globally the species is uncommon but not vulnerable, while in Montana it is at risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat.

#### G1 S1

At high risk because of extremely limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.

#### G2 S2

At risk because of very limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.

#### G3 S3

Potentially at risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.

#### G4 S4

Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.

**G5 S5**

Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

**GX SX**

Presumed Extinct or Extirpated - Species is believed to be extinct throughout its range or extirpated in Montana. Not located despite intensive searches of historical sites and other appropriate habitat, and small likelihood that it will ever be rediscovered.

**GH SH**

Possibly Extinct or Extirpated - Species is known only from historical records, but may nevertheless still be extant; additional surveys are needed.

**GNR SNR**

Not yet ranked.

**GU SU**

Unrankable - Species currently unrankable due to lack of information or due to substantially conflicting information about status or trends.

**GNA SNA**

A conservation status rank is not applicable for one of the following reasons:

The taxa is of Hybrid Origin; is Exotic or Introduced; is Accidental or is Not Confidently Present in the state. (see other codes below)

### Other Codes and Modifiers

**HYB**

Hybrid-Entity not ranked because it represents an interspecific hybrid and not a species.

**T**

**Intraspecific Taxon (trinomial)** - The status of intraspecific taxa (subspecies or varieties) are indicated by a "T-rank" following the species' global rank.

**?**

**Inexact Numeric Rank** - Denotes inexact numeric rank.

**Q**

**Questionable** taxonomy that may reduce conservation priority-Distinctiveness of this entity as a taxon at the current level is questionable; resolution of this uncertainty may result in change from a species to a subspecies or hybrid, or inclusion of this taxon in another taxon, with the resulting taxon having a lower-priority (numerically higher) conservation status rank.

**C**

**Captive or Cultivated Only** - Species at present is extant only in captivity or cultivation, or as a reintroduced population not yet established.

**A**

**Accidental** - Species is accidental or casual in Montana, in other words, infrequent and outside usual range. Includes species (usually birds or butterflies) recorded once or only a few times at a location. A few of these species may have bred on the one or two occasions they were recorded.

**SYN**

**Synonym** - Species reported as occurring in Montana, but the Montana Natural Heritage Program does not recognize the taxon; therefore the species is not assigned a rank.

**B**

**Breeding** - Rank refers to the breeding population of the species in Montana.

**N**

**Nonbreeding** - Rank refers to the non-breeding population of the species in Montana.

**M**

**Migratory** - Species occurs in Montana on during migration.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**LE**

**Listed endangered** - Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range (16 U.S.C. 1532(6)).

**PE**

**Proposed endangered** - Any species for which a proposed rule has been published in the Federal Register to list the species as endangered.

**LT**

**Listed threatened** - Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range (16 U.S.C. 1532(20)).

**PT**

**Proposed threatened** - Any species for which a proposed rule has been published in the Federal Register to list the species as threatened.

**E(S/A) or T(S/A)**

Any species listed endangered or threatened because of similarity of appearance.

## C

**Candidate** - Those taxa for which sufficient information on biological status and threats exists to propose to list them as threatened or endangered. We encourage their consideration in environmental planning and partnerships; however, none of the substantive or procedural provisions of the Act apply to candidate species.

## PDL

**Proposed for delisting** - Any species for which a final rule has been published in the Federal Register to delist the species.

## DM

**Recovered, delisted, and being monitored** - Any previously listed species that is now recovered, has been delisted, and is being monitored.

## NL

**Not listed** - No designation.

## XE

**Essential experimental population** - An experimental population whose loss would be likely to appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival of the species in the wild.

## XN

**Nonessential experimental population** - An experimental population of a listed species reintroduced into a specific area that receives more flexible management under the Act.

## CH

**Critical Habitat** - The specific areas (i) within the geographic area occupied by a species, at the time it is listed, on which are found those physical or biological features (I) essential to conserve the species and (II) that may require special management considerations or protection; and (ii) specific areas outside the geographic area occupied by the species at the time it is listed upon determination that such areas are essential to conserve the species.

## PS

**Partial status** - status in only a portion of the species' range. Typically indicated in a "full" species record where an infraspecific taxon or population, that has a record in the database has USESA status, but the entire species does not.

## PS:value

**Partial status** - status in only a portion of the species' range. The value of that status appears in parentheses because the entity with status is not recognized as a valid taxon by Central Sciences (usually a population defined by geopolitical boundaries or defined administratively, such as experimental populations).

## Forest Service

The status of species on Forest Service lands as defined by the U.S. Forest Service manual (2670.22). These taxa are listed as such by the Regional Forester (Northern Region). The Forest Service lists animal species as:

### Endangered

Listed as Endangered (LE) by the USFWS.

### Threatened

Listed as Threatened (LT) by the USFWS.

### Sensitive

Any species for which the Regional Forester has determined there is a concern for population viability within the state, as evidenced by a significant current or predicted downward trend in populations or habitat.

### Species of Concern

USFS Species-of-Concern (FSH 1909.12, 43.22b) are species for which the Responsible Official determines management actions may be necessary to prevent listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Responsible Official, as appropriate, may identify the following plant and animal species, including macro-lichens, as species-of-concern:

1. Species identified as proposed and candidate species under the ESA.
2. Species with ranks of G-1 through G-3 on the NatureServe ranking system.
3. Infraspecific (subspecific) taxa with ranks of T-1 through T-3 on the NatureServe ranking system.
4. Species that have been petitioned for federal listing and for which a positive "90-day finding" has been made (a 90-day finding is a preliminary finding that substantive information was provided indicating that the petition listing may be warranted and a full status review will be conducted).
5. Species that have been recently delisted (these include species delisted within the past five years and other delisted species for which regulatory agency monitoring is still considered necessary).

### Species of Interest

USFS Species-of-Interest (FSH 1909.12, 43.22c) are species for which the Responsible Official determines that management actions may be necessary or desirable to achieve ecological or other multiple-use objectives. The Responsible Official may review the following sources for potential species-of-interest:

1. Species with ranks of S-1, S-2, N1, or N2 on the NatureServe ranking system.
2. State listed threatened and endangered species that do not meet the criteria as species-of-concern.
3. Species identified as species of conservation concern in State Comprehensive Wildlife Strategies.
4. Bird species on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern National Priority list (for the U.S. portion of the northern Rockies that occur on National Forest system lands).
5. Additional species that valid existing information indicates are of regional or local conservation concern (this includes all Forest Service Northern Region sensitive species) due to factors that may include:
  - a. Significant threats to populations or habitat.

- b. Declining trends in populations or habitat.
  - c. Rarity.
  - d. Restricted ranges (for example, narrow endemics, disjunct populations, or species at the edge of their range).
6. Species that are hunted or fished and other species of public interest. Invasive species may also be considered.

## Bureau of Land Management

BLM Sensitive Species are defined by the BLM 6840 Manual as those that normally occur on Bureau administered lands for which BLM has the capability to significantly affect the conservation status of the species through management. The State Director may designate additional categories of special status species as appropriate and applicable to his or her state's needs. The sensitive species designation, for species other than federally listed, proposed, or candidate species, may include such native species as those that:

1. could become endangered in or extirpated from a state, or within a significant portion of its distribution in the foreseeable future,
2. are under status review by FWS and/or NMFS,
3. are undergoing significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species' existing distribution,
4. are undergoing significant current or predicted downward trends in population or density such that federally listed, proposed, candidate, or State listed status may become necessary,
5. have typically small and widely dispersed populations,
6. are inhabiting ecological refugia, specialized or unique habitats, or
7. are State listed but which may be better conserved through application of BLM sensitive species status. Such species should be managed to the level of protection required by State laws or under the BLM policy for candidate species, whichever would provide better opportunity for its conservation.

## MFWP Conservation Need

In recent years states have received federal funding to develop Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategies. Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks completed *Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy* in 2005. Under this conservation strategy individual animal species were assigned levels of conservation need as follows:

### Tier I:

**Tier I:** Greatest conservation need. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities, and focus areas.

### Tier II:

**Tier II:** Moderate conservation need. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks could use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities, and focus areas.

### Tier III:

**Tier III:** Lower conservation need. Although important to Montana's wildlife diversity, these species, communities, and focus areas are either abundant and widespread or are believed to have adequate conservation already in place.

### Tier IV:

**Tier IV:** Species that are non-native, incidental, or on the periphery of their range and are either expanding or very common in adjacent states.

## Partners In Flight (PIF)

Partners In Flight (PIF) is a partnership of federal and state agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, and many others, with the goal of conserving North American birds. In 1991, PIF began developing a formal species assessment process that could provide consistent, scientific evaluations of conservation status across all bird species in North America, and identify areas most important to the conservation of each species. This process applies quantitative rule sets to complex biological data on the population size, distribution, population trend, threats, and regional abundance of individual bird species to generate simple numerical scores that rank each species in terms of its biological vulnerability and regional status. The process results in global and regional conservation assessments of each bird species that, among other uses, can be used to objectively assign regional and continental conservation priorities among birds.

The species assessment scores and process has recently been updated! Check out the new scores and make sure to download and read the updated Handbook on Species Assessment, which contains important information on the how scores are derived and used in the assessment process. Note that currently only breeding-season regional scores are available for BCRs. We hope to have non-breeding scores available soon.

## **Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) Threat Category**

The MNPS Threat Category process was initiated in 2006 at the Montana Plant Conservation Conference with the formation of a committee represented by federal, state and private botanists, ecologists and biologists. The objectives were to: 1) Evaluate threats impacting Montana's Plant Species of Concern and to classify species according to their level of imperilment/risk as a result of these threats. 2) Develop a ranking system based on the impacts of the identified threats to the species' viability in the state. The result of this process is a 4-tier threat ranking system for Plant Species of Concern in Montana. The threat categories are:

### **Category 1:**

The viability of the species in the state is Highly Threatened by one or more activities. Associated threats have caused or are likely to cause a major reduction of the state population or its habitat that will require 50 years or more for recovery, 20% or more of the state population has been or will be affected, and the negative impact is occurring or is likely to occur within the next 5 years.

### **Category 2:**

The viability of the species or a portion of the species habitat in the state is Threatened by one or more activities, though impacts to the species are expected to be less severe than those in Category 1. Associated threats exist but are not as severe, wide-ranging or immediate as for Category 1, though negative impacts are occurring or are likely to occur.

### **Category 3:**

The viability of the species in the state is Not Threatened or the Threats are Insignificant. Associated threats are either not known to exist, are not likely to occur in the near future or are not known to be having adverse impacts that will severely affect the species' viability in the state.

### **Category 4:**

Assessment not possible due to insufficient and/or conflicting information on potential threats to the species.

Please visit the MNPS website at <http://www.mtnativeplants.org> for additional information on MNPS Threat Categories or for MNPS contact information.