

# **DoD Symposium Brings Together Nation's Top Endangered Species Researchers**

## ***Threatened, Endangered and At-risk Species on DoD and Adjacent Lands Symposium and Workshop***

7-9 June 2005, Baltimore, MD

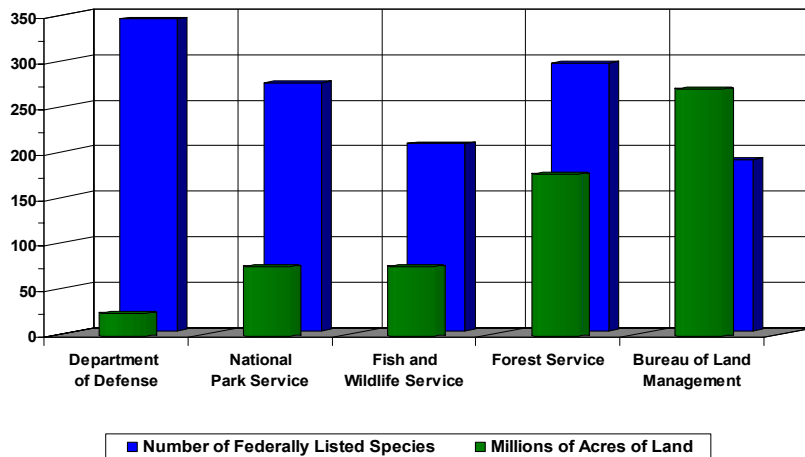
Developing effective methods for sustaining the Department of Defense (DoD) training and testing missions, while simultaneously protecting threatened and endangered species, is a challenge requiring strong partnerships that support ongoing cutting-edge scientific research. Establishing and fostering such partnerships was the focus of this DoD symposium which, for the first time, brought together nearly 200 stakeholders to discuss threatened and endangered species conservation and research needs on DoD and adjacent lands.

The event was sponsored by the DoD's Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) and the Army's Environmental Research and Development Center, as well as the DoD Legacy Program, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Geological Survey.

Participants included researchers and managers from DoD, all the military services, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and various non-profit organizations, state agencies, universities, and private consulting firms.

### **Background**

The DoD utilizes nearly 30 million acres of land, and hundreds of square miles of air and sea space to conduct missions vital to National Security. These same lands, air, and sea space provide habitat for a great diversity of plants and animals, some of which are found only in areas within DoD stewardship. This creates a challenge for DoD: how to effectively use lands, air and sea for National Security missions while simultaneously protecting and conserving species protected by the Endangered Species Act and those at risk of needing such protection.



Data Source: NatureServe and its Natural Heritage member programs, 2003.

With approximately 320 threatened and endangered species and nearly 550 species at risk, the DoD harbors more such species per acre than any other federal agency. The Department also spends more per acre on endangered species management per year than any other federal land management agency. Of the major land managing agencies, DoD spends \$1.70 per acre, while the Fish and Wildlife Services spends \$0.85 per acre, the Forest Service and National Park Service spend \$0.11 per acre and the Bureau of Land Management spends \$0.07 per acre. Over the last 15 years, DoD has spent a total of nearly \$400 million on management of threatened and endangered species.

DoD is required to manage threatened and endangered species in compliance with existing environmental laws and policies. These spaces also must be maintained for long-term sustainability to ensure that soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines can train as they fight and continue to test weapons systems under realistic conditions for years to come. DoD can achieve these apparently disparate goals only through collaborative efforts with its many partners and stakeholders, especially other land and resource management agencies and organizations.

### **Success Through Partnerships**

All five of the Symposium's distinguished plenary speakers highlighted the central role of partnerships for ongoing threatened and endangered species initiatives. This plenary theme set the stage for later technical sessions and panel discussions, as well as individual discussions.

Two of the plenary presenters, Mr. Alex Beehler (Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health) and Dr. J. Michael Scott (University of Idaho), discussed the high quality of habitats and high diversity of species on DoD installations, many of which are located in highly desirable and growing areas. This is especially true in coastal and other low elevation habitats, where many species thrive. For example, Camp Pendleton contains the only undeveloped coastal habitat between Los Angeles and San Diego.

Dr. Scott also addressed the need to renew the conservation promise envisioned by the Endangered Species Act.

Dr. Kurt Fristrup of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology riveted the audience with recordings of the ivory-billed woodpecker, one from 1930 and another from 2005. The 2005 sounds were recorded and automatically detected using technology developed with SERDP funding to monitor black-capped vireos and golden-cheeked warblers in inaccessible areas of Fort Hood, Texas.

Mr. Dan Ashe, Science Advisor to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director, provided both his agency's and his personal perspective regarding the need for threatened and endangered species conservation, identifying key issues and charging the audience to bring research and management priorities back in line with one another. Following this presentation, Colonel Wayne Thomas of the Chief Training Support Division, Office of the Director of Environmental Programs, described the Army's unique pressures in trying to maintain the military's training and testing mission while managing for the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

### **Conservation Research and the Military Mission**

Following the plenary presentations, attendees participated in eight technical sessions: *Planning and Mitigation*, *Habitat Modeling and Assessment*, *Invasive Species: Red Imported Fire Ants*, *Inventory and Monitoring* (two sessions), *Habitat Management and Manipulation*, *Impact Assessment*, and *Species and Habitat Conservation*. Presentations ranged from landscape-scale habitat and data management, to the development of new indices, models, conservation, and surveying technology, to research and monitoring of specific species. Each technical session included a series of papers followed by a panel discussion. These panel discussions enabled the audience and speakers to discuss the various issues with respect to the military mission and conservation of species and species habitat.

### **Looking Ahead**

Participant response to the Symposium was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants established new and, it is hoped, lasting partnerships through which they can work to better integrate research, management, and collaborative initiatives to benefit threatened and endangered species. The presentations, a proceedings document, and other information will be available in the coming months.

This Symposium marked the first time that a broad spectrum of endangered species researchers from diverse backgrounds and agencies/organizations gathered to share their mutual concerns and issues regarding the need to maintain threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Excellent synergies were fostered as participants gained new appreciation for what others are doing in the field of threatened and endangered species research, and many attendees stated their desire to continue the momentum gained at this event into the future.

Ultimately, this meeting was the first step toward a long-term effort for all stakeholders to work together to help DoD fulfill its military mission while protecting the valuable resources with which it is entrusted.

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