U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OKLAHOMA ECOLOGICAL SERVICES FIELD OFFICE

COUNTY OCCURRENCES OF OKLAHOMA FEDERALLY-LISTED ENDANGERED, THREATENED, PROPOSED AND CANDIDATE SPECIES

January 14, 2010

COUNTY	SPECIES	CLASSIFICATION
Adair	American burying beetle [1, A]	Endangered
	gray bat	Endangered
	Indiana bat [13]	Endangered
	interior least tern [7]	Endangered
	Ozark big-eared bat	Endangered
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
	Neosho mucket mussel	Candidate
	rabbitsfoot mussel	Candidate
Alfalfa	interior least tern [6, 7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [8c, 9]	Endangered, Critical habitat designated
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
	lesser prairie-chicken [12]	Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Atoka	American burying beetle [1, B]	Endangered
	interior least tern [7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [9]	Endangered
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
Beaver	interior least tern [7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [8c, 9]	Endangered
	Arkansas River shiner	Threatened, Critical habitat designated
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
	Arkansas darter	Candidate
	lesser prairie-chicken [11]	Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Beckham	interior least tern [7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [9]	Endangered
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
	lesser prairie-chicken [11]	Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Blaine	black-capped vireo [4, 5]	Endangered
	interior least tern [6, 7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [8c, 9]	Endangered
	Arkansas River shiner	Threatened, Critical habitat designated
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
	lesser prairie-chicken [12]	Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Bryan	American burying beetle [1, B]	Endangered
	interior least tern [6, 7]	Endangered
	whooping crane [8h]	Endangered
	piping plover [10]	Threatened
Caddo	black-capped vireo [5]	Endangered

Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)

Status: Endangered (50 FR 21784; May 28, 1985). Critical habitat has not been designated.

Description: The interior least tern is the smallest member of the tern family with a wingspan of 20 inches (50 cm). They have a grayish back and wings, and snowy white undersides. Least terns can be distinguished from all other terns by their combination of a black crown, white forehead, and a variable black-tipped yellow bill.

Life History: Interior least terns arrive at breeding sites from late April to early June where they typically spend four to five months. Pairs go through an elaborate courtship period that includes courtship feedings and a variety of postures and vocalizations. Least terns nest in small colonies on exposed salt flats, river sandbars, or reservoir beaches. Nests are small scrapes in the sand, and usually two or three eggs are laid. The young are fairly mobile soon after hatching. Both parents feed the young and remain with them until fall migration. Terns will travel four or more miles (6+ km) from their breeding colonies to find the small fish that make up the major part of their diet.

Habitat: Interior least terns favor islands or sandbars along large rivers for nesting. The sand must be mostly clear of vegetation to be used by terns. Least terns prefer shallow water for fishing. Water levels must be low enough so that nests stay dry.

Distribution: The historic distribution of the interior least tern was the major river systems of the midwestern United States. These rivers included the Red, Rio Grande, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi river systems. Currently, they occur as small remnant colonies throughout their former range. In Oklahoma, interior least terns nest along most of the larger rivers, as well as at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge near Jet, Oklahoma. Interior least terns winter in South America.

Causes of Decline: Many nesting areas have been permanently flooded by reservoirs and channelization projects. Unpredictable water discharge patterns below dams flood nesting areas. Overgrowth of brush and trees also eliminates remaining habitat. This prevents terns from using these areas as nesting sites. The recreational use of sandbars by humans is a major threat to the tern's reproductive success.

Recovery Needs: Primary recovery tasks for interior least tern populations include determining population trends and habitat requirements, increasing breeding populations, and developing public awareness of the needs of least terns through educational programs.

Other information: The recovery plan for the interior least tern was released in 1990. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is working with various state and federal agencies to monitor and protect the least tern. In Oklahoma, they are working with the Nature Conservancy to protect tern habitat along the Arkansas River near Tulsa, and along the Canadian River near Norman.

Information current as of April 1992

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Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)

Status: Endangered (32 FR 4001, March 11, 1967; 35 FR 8495, June 2, 1970). Critical habitat has been designated (43 FR 20938, May 15, 1978).

Description: At 5 feet (1.5 m), the whooping crane is the tallest American bird. It is a snowy white, long-necked bird with long legs. Its black primary feathers show only during flight. Adults have a red crown and a patch of black feathers below the eye. Young are whitish overall, but have a rusty-colored head and neck.

Life History: Whooping cranes can live more than 20 years in the wild. They are capable of breeding after three years and mate for life. Nest construction begins in late April. Nests are made of bulrush and are located in tall vegetation near water. Typically, two eggs are laid each year and both parents assist in the care of the young. Young stay with their parents during their first winter. Whooping cranes eat a variety of things, including insects, frogs, small birds, rodents, minnows, and waste grains. Blue crabs and clams are especially important food items on the wintering grounds.

Habitat: Whooping cranes inhabit marshes and prairie potholes in the summer. In winter, they are found in coastal marshes and prairies.

Distribution: Historically, whooping cranes were found from the Northwest Territories in Canada through the prairie provinces and northern prairie states to Illinois. The whooping crane formerly wintered in the Carolinas, along the Texas Gulf Coast, and on the intermountain plateau of central Mexico. Currently, an experimental population summers in Idaho and winters in New Mexico. The main population breeds in northern Canada and winters along the Texas Gulf Coast. It passes through western Oklahoma each spring and fall during migration. The Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, near Jet, Oklahoma, is a very important migration stopover area. During migration, whooping cranes sometimes are sighted elsewhere in Oklahoma along rivers, in grain fields, or in shallow wetlands.

Causes of Decline: Whooping cranes have declined primarily because of loss of wintering and breeding habitat. Shootings and collisions with powerlines or fences have been sources of mortality in recent years.

Recovery Needs: Top priorities for whooping crane recovery include increasing the main wild population to a minimum of 40 breeding pairs, increasing captive breeding efforts, and establishing at least two new wild populations.

Other information: By the mid 1940s, only 15 whooping cranes were present in the wild. An intensive captive-breeding program and careful protection of wild flocks have slowly increased the number in the wild to more than 120.

Whooping crane location data - "A Comprehensive Review of Observational and Site Evaluation Data of Migrant Whooping Cranes in the United States, 1943-99" can be obtained here. This document provides observation methods and results, recommendations, state sighting summaries, and a comprehensive observation database.

Reporting whooping crane sighting -Sightings are important for monitoring the status of federally-listed species. To report whooping crane sightings to the US Fish and Wildlife Service please complete the sighting report form provided here. This form can be downloaded and/or printed from the attachment below. Submittal instructions are described on the form.

Information current as of April 1992 (last two paragraphs added November 2003)

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Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

Status: Endangered in the watershed of the Great Lakes, threatened in the remainder of its range (50 FR 50726; December 11, 1985). Critical habitat has not been designated.

Description: The piping plover is a small shorebird about seven inches (18 cm) long with a wingspan of about 15 inches (38 cm). Adults have sand-colored upper parts and white undersides. During the breeding season, piping plovers have a single dark band across the breast and forehead. They can be distinguished from similar species by their bright orange legs.

Life History: Piping plovers arrive on their breeding grounds along the Atlantic Coast in late March and on their prairie breeding grounds in early May. Males defend territories and attract females with aerial displays. Piping plovers are monogamous and both parents participate in all stages of parental care. Four eggs are typically laid in a shallow nest scrape and hatching occurs 25 to 31 days after completion of the clutch. Adults depart from breeding areas as early as the first week in July. Piping plovers feed on a variety of invertebrates, including worms, crustaceans, and insects.

Habitat: Piping plovers nest on sandy beaches along the ocean or lakes. Along rivers, piping plovers use the bare areas of islands or sandbars. They also nest on the pebbly mud of interior alkali lakes and ponds. Birds nesting on gravel have higher reproductive success than those nesting on alkali. During the winter, piping plovers use algal, mud, and sand flats along the Gulf Coast. Spoil islands in the intracoastal waterway are also used.

Distribution: Historically, piping plovers bred along the Atlantic Coast, on the Northern Great Plains, and around the Great Lakes. Piping plovers winter along the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and in the Bahamas and West Indies. Although drastically reduced, remnant populations occur throughout their historic range. Piping plovers migrate through Oklahoma each spring and fall.

Causes of Decline: Piping plovers have been drastically reduced in number, due to the loss of beach habitat and to the modification of habitat through the channelization and damming of rivers. These practices eliminate sandbars and allow the growth of vegetation on nesting areas. Nesting success of piping plovers on beaches used by humans is much lower than on isolated beaches, because of disturbance.

Recovery Needs: Top needs for piping plover recovery include monitoring population trends, managing and protecting populations and their habitat, and further research on the general ecology of the species.

Other information: The piping plover recovery plan was completed in 1988. Hunters almost eliminated the species in the early 1900s. However, because of strict protection, populations recovered by the 1940s. The current decrease in numbers has resulted from habitat loss. Currently, the population of piping plovers is estimated at approximately 5,000 individuals.

Information current as of April 1992

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