

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



Threatened and Endangered Species Program's Strategic Plan for Special Status Species Conservation and Recovery



September 2022

Cover photo: Dwarf bear poppy by Melissa Buchmann, BLM



San Joaquin woollythread by Ryan O'Dell, BLM

California jewelflower
by Ryan O'Dell, BLM

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**Threatened and Endangered
Species Program's
Strategic Plan for
Special Status Species
Conservation and
Recovery**



September 2022

BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Program

MISSION:

Conserve and recover special status species by collaborating across programs and with our partners, implementing proactive, science-based ecosystem-level conservation, and communicating Threatened and Endangered Species Program successes within the BLM and to our partners and the public.

VISION:

The BLM is a respected leader in the conservation and recovery of special status species, conserving and restoring healthy, native habitats and ecosystems for long-term species' population resiliency and viability.



Northern spotted owl by Zia Fukuda, BLM

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Gila monster by John Kellam, BLM

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages more land than any other federal agency in the United States. The BLM's mission, which is principally defined by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, directs the agency to manage public lands for multiple uses while conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources. The BLM serves a vital role as a leader in the conservation of species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Program (T&E Program) developed this strategic plan to provide a framework that guides collaborative, proactive conservation and recovery actions for species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act and Bureau sensitive species and their habitats.

Under this plan, the T&E Program will work with other BLM programs and managers; nongovernmental partners; and federal, state, tribal, and local governments to identify and implement mutually beneficial priorities at population, ecosystem, and landscape scales where appropriate. The T&E Program will also communicate successes among partners and the public to engage and motivate continued conservation efforts for special status species. Strong partnerships are crucial to the management of threatened, endangered, and

sensitive species on BLM-managed lands and for habitat and population connectivity across land management jurisdictions. Partnerships allow participants to leverage valuable staffing and funding resources and technical knowledge and capabilities.

This plan highlights four overarching goals intended to further BLM leadership in the conservation and recovery of special status species by implementing proactive conservation efforts, restoring and conserving ecosystems, and managing the effects of climate change:

1. Advance special status species conservation and recovery.
2. Increase success through collaboration with partners.
3. Prioritize budget and staffing.
4. Prioritize communication.

This plan will be accompanied by a separate, dynamic 5-year action plan that describes in detail the state-specific conservation and recovery projects the BLM will strive to accomplish. The 5-year action plan will be dynamic and updated as needed to adapt to changing circumstances, including staffing and funding resources.



Sclerocactus dawsonii by Phillip Krening, BLM



Canada lynx by Lisa Hupp, USFWS

BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Program

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Threatened and Endangered Species Program (T&E Program) works collaboratively with other BLM programs and partners to conserve and recover species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, and Bureau sensitive species¹ (collectively referred to as special status species²) and their habitats.

Conservation of threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and animal species and their habitats is vital for maintaining ecological stability and biodiversity. Wildlife and plants contribute to ecosystem³ function. They also play a significant role in combatting climate change (e.g., plants store carbon, animals spread seeds). The decline or loss of species contributes to the unraveling or changing of ecosystems with significant consequences to diverse and resilient landscapes. Population trends in threatened and endangered species, as well the number of federally listed species, serve as bellwethers for how well the BLM is conserving general wildlife and plant species and the habitats that support them.

BLM-managed lands offer substantial opportunities for recovery of many rare or listed plant and

Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants "are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people."

- Endangered Species Act of 1973



Polar bears by Craig Perham, BLM

animal species because of the great expanse of habitat occurring on these lands. The BLM is responsible for managing approximately 245 million acres of public land, mostly in the Western United States, and approximately 710 million acres of subsurface mineral estate nationwide, more land than any other federal agency. Since 2010, BLM T&E Program efforts, supported by other BLM programs and federal, state, tribal, and local government and nongovernmental partner efforts, have contributed to changes in ESA listing status for many species (Table 1).

¹ Bureau sensitive species are species that require special management consideration to avoid potential future listing under the Endangered Species Act and that have been identified in accordance with procedures set forth in BLM Manual 6840, "Special Status Species Management."

² Per BLM Manual 6840, special status species are collectively, federally listed (threatened or endangered) or proposed and Bureau sensitive species, which include both federal candidate species and delisted species within 5 years of delisting.

³ An ecosystem is the structural and functional unit of ecology where the living organisms interact with each other and the surrounding environment. Ecosystems can be any scale (e.g., a single spring that is home to an endemic species, an entire mountain range that provides habitat and migratory corridors for wide ranging species) dependent on the species and conservation goals of interest.

Table 1. Listing status changes for species on BLM-managed lands since 2010.

Delisting	San Benito evening primrose
	Lesser long-nosed bat
	Foskett speckled dace
	Hualapai Mexican vole
	Borax Lake chub
	Maguire daisy
Downlisting from Endangered to Threatened	Kuenzler hedgehog cactus
	Stephens' kangaroo rat
	Beach layia
Not Warranted for Listing	White-tailed prairie dog
	Boreal toad
	Relict leopard frog
	Sonoran desert tortoise
	Greater sage-grouse
	Southern Idaho ground squirrel
	Goose Creek milkvetch
	Siskiyou mariposa lily
	Columbia spotted frog
	Least chub
	Packard's milkvetch
	Yellow-billed loon
	Las Vegas buckwheat
	Churchill Narrows buckwheat
	White River beardtongue
	Graham's beardtongue
	Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger beetle
	Pygmy rabbit
	Gila monster
	Gunnison's prairie dog
	Bifid duct pyrg
	Sub-globose snake pyrg

Although these accomplishments are celebrated, significant challenges remain. More than 330 threatened and endangered species and 2,430 sensitive species are known to occur on BLM-managed lands as of 2022. For many species, BLM-managed lands provide more than 50 percent of the known occurrence records for these species. Recovery of threatened and endangered species is difficult and challenging, requiring substantial time, resources, dedication, and partnerships.



Burrowing owls by Rich Keen, USFWS



Wood bison by Laura Whitehouse, USFWS



Chum and Chinook salmon by Jason Post, BLM



Gunnison sage-grouse by Neil Losin

The challenges will continue to increase as the diversity and intensity of resource use on public lands rise and as societal values and the climate change. Climate change and its effects on water resources and habitat conditions threaten the health and function of ecosystems and pose serious challenges in maintaining management flexibility while balancing multiple use mandates. The T&E Program plays a crucial role in meeting these challenges by managing for ecological resilience, with resilience defined as an ecosystem's ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disturbance.

The T&E Program emphasizes a proactive, partnership-based approach toward conservation of BLM special status species. Through this proactive approach, the T&E Program works with other BLM programs and partners to identify species' needs and develop and implement conservation actions that make a difference in habitat quality and connectivity, species population trends, and conservation outcomes.

Proactive conservation efforts that are identified before land use activities are proposed or implemented maximize conservation benefits. These proactive efforts include the development and implementation of recovery plans, conservation agreements and habitat strategies/plans, land use planning commitments or revisions, and land acquisitions or easements.

The T&E Program and this plan are consistent with statutes, regulations, and policies, such as the ESA; Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; and BLM policy (e.g., BLM Manual 6840, "Special Status Species Management"). In accordance with FLPMA, the BLM manages public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. FLPMA requires that "the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values..." (FLPMA, section 102(a)(8)).



Pacific fisher by Zia Fukuda, BLM

Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Goal 1: Advance special status species conservation and recovery.

The BLM will collaborate with partners to implement proactive, science-based conservation and restoration of species' habitats and populations to support recovery and resilience of special status species.

Objective 1.1: Emphasize the ESA section 7(a)(1) proactive recovery mandate, in collaboration with other BLM programs; nongovernmental partners; and federal, state, tribal, and local governments.

Actions

1.1.1: Develop and implement proactive section 7(a)(1) conservation plans⁴ for priority species and geographic areas at ecosystem and landscape levels.



Wilkinson's nailwort by Patrick Alexander, BLM



Humpback chubs by David Herasimtschuk, Freshwaters Illustrated

1.1.2: Develop and include proactive conservation measures as part of the proposed/preferred actions in NEPA evaluations and section 7(a)(2) consultations, especially at programmatic scales. Conservation measures can include species- or ecosystem-specific biodiversity goals, design features, allowable uses, mitigation standards, adaptive management, and success measures that result in a net benefit for special status species and habitats.

1.1.3: Focus on increasing on-the-ground conservation efforts (e.g., habitat restoration, seed collection and propagation, disease control, invasive species control, translocations, population establishment) that directly address threats and achieve conservation and recovery of special status species. Science-related activities (e.g., research, inventory, monitoring, habitat models) should be directly related toward the implementation of on-the-ground conservation or recovery efforts.

⁴ The primary objective of a section 7(a)(1) conservation plan is a proactively developed, robust set of conservation actions, processes, or policy decisions for a species (or set of species) in a given geography, emphasizing ecosystem/landscape management and habitat connectivity, to achieve or support listed species' recovery and/or sensitive species conservation. Section 7(a)(1) conservation plans can take the form of formal interagency conservation agreements or strategies (often with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service and other partners), habitat management plans, or agreements (e.g., Good Neighbor Authority, interagency agreements, partner assistance agreements). Section 7(a)(1) conservation plans can also be completed as part of BLM programs or actions, integrated into a proposed action in a National Environmental Policy Act document or as land use plan commitments.

Objective 1.2: Manage the effects of climate change on special status species and their habitats.

Actions

1.2.1: Identify, restore, and conserve large landscapes that support an ecologically connected network of habitats to promote resiliency to climate change.

1.2.2: Develop and implement land use practices and avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures in land use plans, NEPA preferred actions, and section 7(a)(2) consultations that integrate climate change scenarios and support species and habitat adaptation.

1.2.3: Actively support the management of populations (e.g., seed collection, propagation, translocations) to ensure sustainability and maintain or improve biodiversity and other ecological functions.

Objective 1.3: Focus on ecosystem management approaches and emphasize multispecies and multistate conservation efforts where feasible.

Actions

1.3.1: Integrate ecosystem management in partnerships and BLM planning efforts (e.g., identify and protect areas with high biodiversity through the land use planning effort) with an emphasis on conserving and restoring lands to combat climate change, improving landscape connectivity and function, and restoring past disturbances.

1.3.2: Identify and restore landscape connectivity and function for special status species.

1.3.3: Increase support and use of native plant materials for restoration.

1.3.4: Prioritize restoration and conservation actions that support multiple species or habitats, increase biodiversity, and increase habitat connectivity.



Aplomado falcon by The Peregrine Fund



California condors by Bob Wick, BLM



Mojave desert tortoise by John Kellam, BLM



Arizona toad by John Kellam, BLM



Grizzly bear by Laura Romin and Larry Dalton



Mesa Verde cactus by Bob Sivinski



Marbled murrelet by Rich MacIntosh, USFWS



Dakota skipper by Timothy Zachmeier, USFWS

Goal 2: Increase success through collaboration with partners.

The BLM will leverage extensive public land resources, working collaboratively with other BLM programs; nongovernmental partners; and federal, state, tribal, and local governments to implement conservation efforts for special status species and their habitats.

Objective 2.1: Increase BLM knowledge and engagement in special status species conservation at all levels of the organization.

Actions

2.1.1: Develop and implement ESA and special status species policy training for managers and staff.

2.1.2: Increase coordination efforts of Headquarters and state, district, and field offices with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to develop conservation and recovery projects that meet the objectives of Goal #1.

2.1.3: Use coordinated reviews (i.e., species or ecosystems) at the state, regional, and field levels, and in collaboration with the USFWS, NMFS, and other partners, to identify proactive strategies that result in conservation and recovery of priority species.

2.1.4: Work internally with other Headquarters program staff to identify cross-program goals and objectives, identify shared goals for national-level agreements, and prioritize and integrate special status species conservation efforts BLM-wide that meet the objectives of Goal #1.

2.1.5: Establish a special status species conservation and recovery community of practice within the BLM. This community of practice should be relied on to foster collaborative action and leverage resources, increase learning, share best practices and lessons learned, and connect across organizational and geographic boundaries.

Objective 2.2: Increase support and collaboration among federal, state, tribal, and local governments and nongovernmental partners.

Action

2.2.1: Take advantage of partnering opportunities that derive significant conservation benefits through assistance agreements as available.

2.2.2: Identify and pursue new partnering opportunities, increasing the number of BLM partnerships to create and sustain funding opportunities.

2.2.3: Collaborate with partners to share costs and maximize resource dollars to conserve and recover special status species.

2.2.4: To ensure use of the best available science and gain new conservation partners, participate on species' recovery teams, Level I and II consultation technical teams, climate change work groups, pollinator conservation efforts, native plant restoration groups, and other relevant team efforts.



MacFarlane's four o'clock by Anne Halford, BLM

Goal 3: Prioritize budget and staffing.

The BLM will work with management and across programs to leverage available funding and staffing resources to achieve successful conservation outcomes.

Objective 3.1: Identify and address staffing and expertise needs for effective special status species conservation and recovery, including ESA sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) efforts.

Actions

3.1.1: Coordinate with state, district, and field office managers to identify and fund T&E Program-related staffing needs to achieve successful conservation and recovery of special status species.

3.1.2: Coordinate with state, district, and field office managers to identify priority tasks and conservation outcomes to focus staff efforts and achieve successful conservation and recovery of special status species.

Objective 3.2: Focus limited resources to facilitate the recovery and conservation of special status species.

Actions

3.2.1: Identify priority ESA-listed and Bureau sensitive species and geographic areas to focus limited resources and achieve conservation and recovery successes.



Black-footed ferret by Laura Romin and Larry Dalton

3.2.2: Identify workloads and resource needs (e.g., staffing, funding) to ensure success of proactive conservation measures for priority special status species and their habitats. Use available resources (e.g., USFWS recovery plans, species status assessments, state wildlife action plans) when feasible to inform the needs assessment and development of conservation projects for special status species.

3.2.3: Determine potential use of geospatial database referencing tools (e.g., Vegetation Management Action Portal) to assist in achieving the T&E Program's vision and mission.

Objective 3.3: Improve coordination and funding commitments for special status species conservation and recovery across BLM resource programs.

Actions

3.3.1: Work with other resource programs to share costs and maximize resource dollars to jointly fund projects that advance conservation and recovery.

3.3.2: Collaboratively work on cross-boundary and cross-geographic area projects to help collectively fund larger, ecosystem-scale projects.

3.3.3: Identify position needs, communicate to BLM managers and leadership the advantages of increasing the T&E Program's labor capacity, and work with other resource programs to collaboratively address capacity needs.



Monarch butterfly by Tom Koerner, USFWS

Goal 4: Prioritize communication.

The T&E Program will communicate conservation priorities and accomplishments with other BLM programs; nongovernmental partners; federal, state, tribal, and local governments; and the public to encourage collaboration and shared approaches to conserving and recovering special status species and their habitats. In doing so, the BLM will inspire others to appreciate the value of public lands and their importance for the conservation and recovery of fish, wildlife, and plants.

Objective 4.1: Ensure that BLM specialists, managers, and leadership recognize the importance and value of T&E Program conservation and recovery accomplishments.

Actions

4.1.1: Promote communication and collaboration with other BLM programs to identify multiple use management priorities and mutually beneficial goals, objectives, and actions to advance the T&E Program mission.

4.1.2: Share special status species, ESA section 7(a)(1), and ESA section 7(a)(2) conservation success stories across BLM programs and with Headquarters and state, district, and field offices.



Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger beetle by Finian C. Keleher

4.1.3: Recognize successful team, office, and individual conservation efforts within the BLM that contribute toward special status species recovery.

4.1.4: Brief new staff professionals and managers on the T&E Program's goals and priorities.

Objective 4.2: Engage BLM partners and the public in the importance of public lands for special status species conservation and recovery.

Actions

4.2.1: Communicate T&E Program priorities and identify mutual priorities with other BLM programs; nongovernmental partners; and state, federal, tribal, and local governments to emphasize the importance of public lands for special status species conservation.

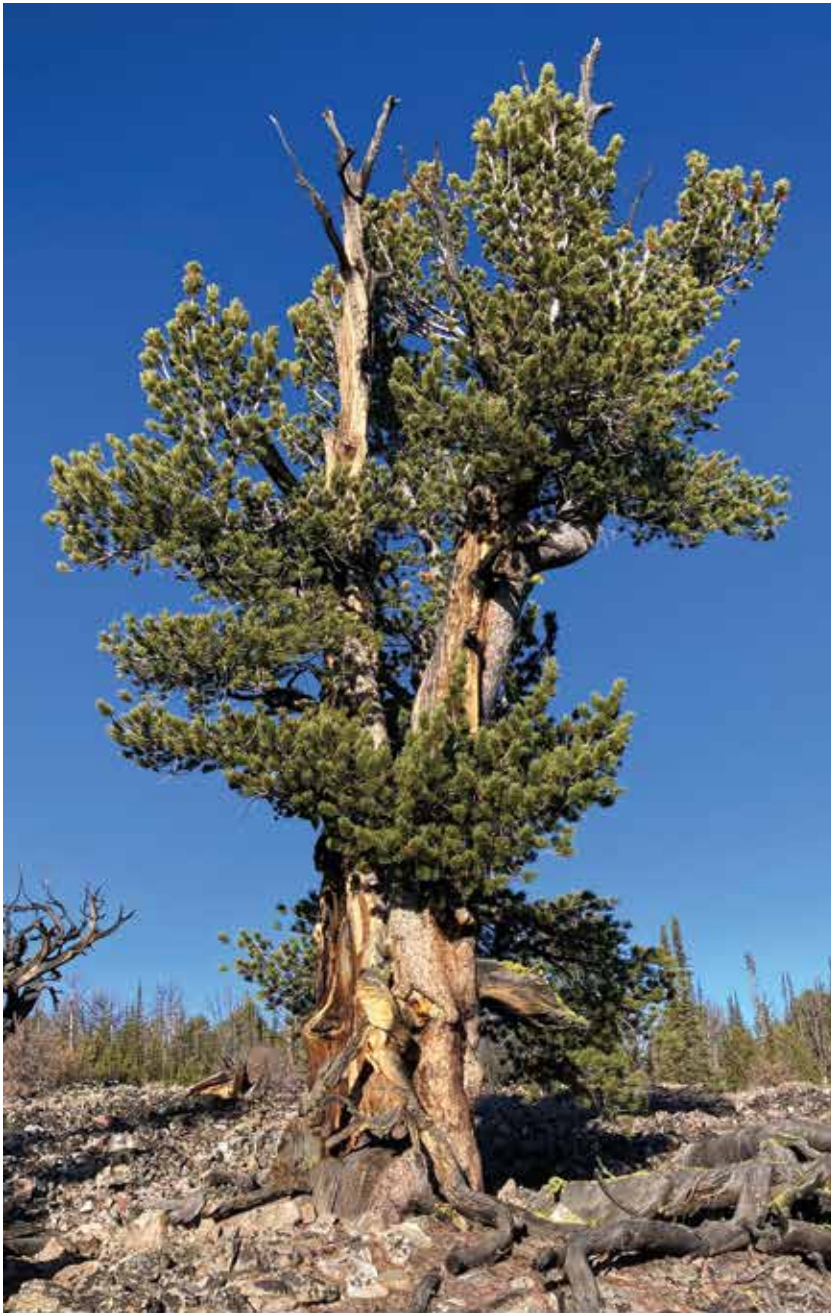
4.2.2: Communicate and engage with the public to demonstrate the importance of public lands for special status species conservation and recovery.

4.2.3: Work with BLM public affairs staff to use existing or create new outreach tools to communicate creatively with the public.

4.2.4: Engage, train, and support a new generation of Americans working to further conservation in the country.



Devils Hole pupfish by Olin Feuerbacher, USFWS



Whitebark pine by Hannah Alverson, BLM



Warner sucker by Wahoo Films



Gypsum Townsend's aster
by Patrick Alexander, BLM



Mexican spotted owl by Rick Fridell



Pygmy rabbit by Jim Witham



Rusty-patched bumble bee by USFWS



Pond turtle by Zia Fukuda, BLM

Keys to Program Success

Achieving the four overarching goals requires the T&E Program to operationalize proactive conservation actions through collaborating with partners, enhancing human resources, and developing and using sound science. The T&E Program will prioritize actions that:

- Proactively conserve and recover special status species and their habitats, with an emphasis toward increasing on-the-ground conservation efforts (e.g., habitat restoration, seed collection and propagation, disease control, invasive species control, translocations, population establishment).
- Combat climate change.
- Inform and ensure the prioritization and implementation of landscape connectivity objectives for special status species.
- Emphasize ecosystem and landscape management.
- Promote multispecies and multistate conservation efforts where appropriate.
- Increase and conserve biodiversity.
- Avoid, reduce/minimize, and mitigate habitat disturbance and proactively restore habitats through multiple use implementation programs in coordination with permitting and approval processes.

The T&E Program will pursue opportunities for collaboration with other BLM programs and partners to benefit special status species conservation and recovery outcomes. Other BLM programs can contribute to key T&E Program priorities by developing and participating in proactive ESA conservation plans (i.e., section 7(a)(1)) that help recover listed species or preclude the need to list sensitive species before land use allocations occur. Other BLM programs can also help conserve and recover special status species

and their habitats within the scope of permitting activities by developing and implementing special status species conservation measures as part of land use planning and project-specific permitting requirements.

The proactive conservation and recovery of special status species will also require collaborative partnerships that can help support and leverage BLM special status species conservation investments. Successful achievement of key program priorities will depend upon the T&E Program's ability to engage partners and identify mutually beneficial conservation efforts, especially where species and habitats cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The T&E Program will develop and use sound science (e.g., research, inventory, monitoring, habitat models) to ensure successful conservation efforts and provide valuable information to the USFWS and NMFS for listing and recovery decisions. The T&E Program also supports evidence-based practices and the best available science to inform management decisions.



Southwestern willow flycatcher by Loree Harvey, BLM

Conclusion

BLM-managed lands provide habitat and conservation opportunities for more than 2,700 special status species. BLM management of these species has already helped to achieve delisting and downlisting of federally listed threatened and endangered species and resulted in decisions by the USFWS that sensitive species are not warranted for listing. Increasing human uses of federal lands, coupled with climate change, provide significant challenges for the sustained conservation and recovery of special status species

and their habitats. This strategic plan guides a sustained, proactive response to conservation and recovery challenges, emphasizing the value of partnerships and a need to manage at landscape and ecosystem levels. This strategic plan is meant to inspire and promote conservation and stewardship of the habitat upon which special status species depend, thereby ensuring the best outcomes for the benefit of current and future generations.



Lesser long-nosed bat by Scott Altenbach, Bat Conservation International



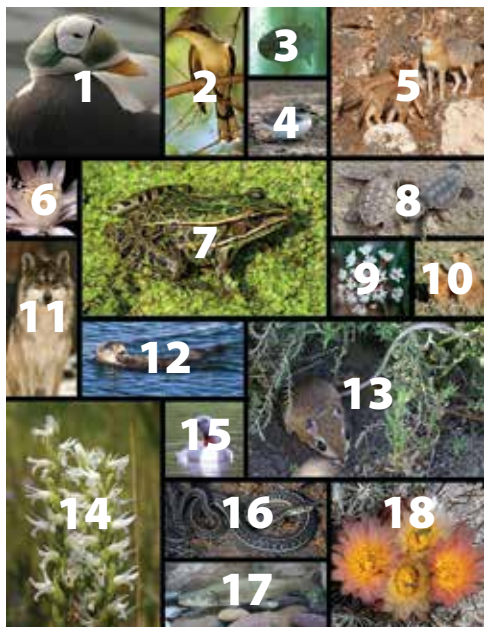
Blunt-nosed leopard lizard
by Michael Westphal, BLM



Peninsular bighorn sheep
by Jesse Pluim, BLM



Beach layia by Jennifer Wheeler, BLM



1. Spectacled eider by Laura Whitehouse, USFWS
2. Yellow-billed cuckoo by Rick Fridell
3. Pahump poolfish by Jim Boone
4. Snowy plover by Peter Pearsall, USFWS
5. Kit fox by John Kellam, BLM
6. Nightblooming cereus by Patrick Alexander, BLM
7. Northern leopard frog by Jessica Bolser, USFWS
8. Loggerhead sea turtle by USFWS
9. Galisteo sand verbena by Patrick Alexander, BLM
10. Utah prairie dog pups by Laura Romin and Larry Dalton
11. Mexican wolf by Jacquelyn Fallon
12. Southern sea otter by Michael Westphal, BLM
13. Tipton kangaroo rat by Stephen Layman, BLM
14. Ute ladies'-tresses by Anne Halford, BLM
15. Red-throated loon by Bob Wick, BLM
16. Northern Mexican gartersnake by USFWS
17. Colorado pikeminnow by Joe Ferreira
18. Siler pincushion cactus by Rick Fridell

