



## CDFW Receives Prestigious Award for Endangered Species Conservation

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The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and partners from government, education and private industry are being recognized for outstanding efforts in wildlife conservation. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) presented the SFI Conservation Leadership Award for conservation work to CDFW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina State University and Sierra Pacific Industries at its annual conference in Squaw Valley on Wednesday, Oct. 7.



The award is for the partnership's work related to the ***fisher, a large member of the weasel family that ranges from California to British Columbia, including the Sierra Nevada Mountains.*** Researchers are working to better understand fisher habitat and to restore the animals to some areas where they were historically found.

"It's wonderful to have CDFW scientists and staff recognized on a national level for their dedication and hard work protecting a precious state resource," said Neil Manji, Manager of CDFW's Northern Region. "We thank SFI for the award and look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the coming years."

Because of declining habitat and population losses, fishers in Oregon, Washington and California are proposed for federal listing as a threatened species. Recently the California Fish and Game Commission voted to list fishers in the southern Sierra Nevada as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act.

Beginning in 2009, 40 fishers were captured on public and private timberlands in northwestern California and released onto Sierra Pacific Industries' Stirling Management Area, east of Chico. The released fishers and their offspring have been studied since that time and the results indicate that a small population was successfully established. The restoration of fishers to this area has strengthened the population of fishers in northern California by expanding their range. It has also created a unique opportunity to study fishers on a landscape managed for multiple objectives including wildlife habitat, ecosystem services and forest products.

This was the first time fishers have been restored to their original habitat in California. The project is a collaborative success story showing how wildlife agencies, universities and private timberland owners can collaborate to conserve wildlife.

# Shikar-Safari Club International Honors Lt. Andrew Halverson as Wildlife Officer of the Year

December 29, 2015

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California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Lt. Andrew Halverson was recently selected by the Shikar-Safari Club International as recipient of its 2015 Wildlife Officer of the Year award.

Shikar-Safari honors one wildlife officer each year who exemplifies outstanding leadership, skill, conduct and ingenuity in the performance of his or her duties. Lt. Halverson demonstrates these characteristics and more, and is recognized as a true leader among his peers, fellow wildlife officers and command staff. He has good working relationships with allied agencies and constituents in communities he proudly serves. He is known and respected for his work ethic, sense of humor, professionalism and integrity. In addition to performing his lieutenant duties in Kern County, he balances a diverse case load, field training officer tasks, department firearms armorer tasks and his special assignment to the Inland Region of the California Hazardous Materials Investigators Association, covering 13 counties.

“Lt. Halverson truly encompasses everything the Shikar-Safari award stands for,” said CDFW Law Enforcement Division Chief David Bess.

Lt. Halverson embodies the skills and abilities of a well-rounded wildlife officer and leads his squad of six in Kern County by example. Last year, Halverson was lead case officer in several challenging cases involving environmental and habitat violations. He takes the extra steps necessary to assure properly investigated cases, with accurate documentation of events and actions. His value as an investigator is immeasurable. Halverson possesses a master’s degree in forensics and has five years of experience as a crime scene investigator. As a lieutenant, he is creative, supportive and readily applies his abilities to stop poachers, polluters and unlawful marijuana cultivators.

Kern County has experienced an increase in black bear activity over the last few years and as result, Lt. Halverson and his squad have handled a high volume of difficult human-wildlife conflicts involving bears. They have handled a variety of issues ranging from bears in homes, bears in trees and bears in towns. Halverson applies his creative nature to develop unique and successful approaches to dealing with these challenges.

Halverson readily conducts public outreach events and meetings. He has a talent for working with the public, the media, businesses and allied law enforcement agencies. Regardless of the challenges, even in highly charged and potentially political situations, Lt. Halverson has a natural ability to see problems through to a successful resolution.

Shikar-Safari was founded in 1952 as a hunting organization but quickly recognized its potential to affect meaningful change in the area of wildlife conservation. Funds raised by the Shikar-Safari Club International Foundation are used to support various conservation projects in the United States and throughout the world.

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# State's Wildlife Action Plan Receives Stamp of Approval and Notable Award

February 17, 2016

California's key wildlife conservation planning tool, the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), has received final approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The plan, which recently underwent a comprehensive 10-year update, also won the California Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP) award for Outstanding Environmental Resource Document. The award will be presented at the AEP conference in San Diego in April.



"SWAP 2015 is the product of many individuals and organizations working together to ensure California's wildlife resources are around for generations to come," said CDFW Director Charlton Bonham. "A huge thank you goes out to everyone who participated in this herculean process. I am proud of the solid plan we now have in place to address the serious environmental challenges we face. It is particularly gratifying to have these efforts recognized by the California Association of Environmental Professionals."

The action plan identifies and prioritizes at-risk species and habitats, and provides conservation strategies to help protect and conserve these species. The plan is not a regulatory document. Rather, it is meant to build consensus and collaboration by identifying best management practices for conserving the state's most vulnerable aquatic, marine and terrestrial resources.

"SWAP 2015 focuses on conservation of wildlife resources using an approach that is in harmony with a growing human population and the need for resilience in the face of a changing climate," explained Bonham. "It is a flexible, but scientifically grounded plan. Its implementation relies on making important and helpful conservation information more accessible to resource managers and the public, and on developing lasting partnerships with a broad array of governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, and citizens."

The USFWS designates Regional Review Teams to assess each state's wildlife action plan and recommend approval. California's revised plan was reviewed by Alaska's Department of Fish and Wildlife and by the USFWS's Migratory Birds and State Programs for Region 7.

Approval of the plan opens up millions of dollars in federal grant funding for programs that benefit at-risk species such as the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, coho salmon, and others.

As mandated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, CDFW revises the State Wildlife Action Plan every 10 years. In addition to the conservation strategies addressed for each ecosystem, the plan also contains nine companion plans to address key overarching topics, including agriculture, consumptive and recreational users, energy development, forests and rangeland, land-use planning, transportation planning, tribal lands, water management, and marine resources.

The SWAP 2015 is available online at [www.wildlife.ca.gov/SWAP/](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/SWAP/).

# CDFW Monitors Effect of Severe Drought on Wildlife

March 10, 2016

## Stream- and Wetland-Dependent Species Most at Risk

Amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal populations that depend on freshwater marsh, streamside habitat and wet meadows are struggling most to endure the drought that has gripped California for more than four years, according to a comprehensive assessment released today by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).



CDFW biologists ranked the vulnerability of the state's terrestrial species and gave top priority for additional monitoring and assistance to 48 species. The greatest concentrations of these high-risk populations are found in Southern California coastal, mountain and valley regions, the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the Mojave Desert, Central Valley and the southern Cascade mountain range.

The majority of these "Priority 1" species are found in freshwater marsh, riparian and wet meadow habitats. The species include the mountain yellow-legged frog, the giant garter snake, tricolored blackbird and the Amargosa vole.

CDFW researchers analyzed and assessed the vulnerability of more than 358 land species. Scientists then classified them into Priority I (most vulnerable) and Priority II (less vulnerable) categories. All of the species evaluated were threatened, endangered or were otherwise considered species of special concern before the drought impacted them.

CDFW also determined the San Joaquin Valley, southern Sierra Nevada, western Mojave Desert and Owens Valley areas experienced the least amount of normal average rainfall during this extended drought. As a result, wildlife in these regions struggle most finding resources to survive.

"While many species are mobile and able to deal with periods of extended drought, some are more vulnerable than others," said CDFW Program Manager Karen Miner. "Each species plays an important role in the overall health of the ecosystem and contributes something that impacts other animals in the food chain. It's important to recognize that the effects of extended or more frequent extreme droughts may not be immediately apparent for some species."

CDFW is taking action to help the most vulnerable species. Funding for these projects comes from several sources including emergency drought response funds provided in the current state budget, California's Threatened and Endangered Species tax check-off program, federal grant programs, and contributions from a number of universities and other agencies working to save these rare animals.

- In the Sierra Nevada and Northern California mountain ranges, amphibians such as yellow-legged frogs, Yosemite toads and Cascades frogs are struggling. Some species' tadpoles require multiple years to develop into juveniles and lack of suitable habitat has eliminated several years of breeding effort at once. Removal of non-native predatory fish from select areas as well as assistance with disease intervention, translocations and reintroductions are underway to improve their chances of long-term survival.
- In the Mojave Desert, researchers identified the Amargosa vole as a species of great concern. Voles play an important role as a prey species and were on the verge of extinction because their habitat had dried up. Juveniles were rescued and taken into captivity to establish a breeding population. Once suitable habitat is secured or restored, the voles will be released to the wild.
- In southern Santa Cruz and northern Monterey counties, monitoring of the endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander revealed that over the last three years the breeding ponds dried up before the larvae could metamorphose into juveniles that are capable of surviving out of water. CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service salvaged hundreds of larvae on a property jointly managed by the two agencies. The salamanders were raised in captivity and released back at the site after restoration was completed. Follow-up monitoring is ongoing.
- In the San Joaquin Valley, biologists are working with UC Berkeley, Humboldt State University and other organizations to save the giant kangaroo rat, a keystone species that serves as prey or provides habitat for several other listed animals. Kangaroo rats do not require direct water and get what they need from seeds. After several years without precipitation, seed availability was diminished and the population plummeted. As a result, the threatened and endangered San Joaquin kit fox is also struggling because their primary prey is disappearing. Researchers are studying population responses to food resource availability to determine how best to intervene to save these species.

California has more native species and the greatest number of endemic species than any other state in the nation with approximately 68 amphibian species, 85 reptile species, 429 bird species and 185 mammal species, many that occur nowhere else in the world. Identifying and saving at risk wildlife will secure the future for other populations in the years to come.

View the [full report](#).

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