

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION  
Title 58. Recreation  
Part II. Fish and Boat Commission  
Chapter 75  
Fishing

Juniata Valley Audubon, a regional conservation organization with 450 members in southcentral Pennsylvania supports proposed amendments adding the northern cricket frog and blue-spotted salamander to the list of endangered species.

The Northern Cricket Frog is apparently extirpated from approximately 92% of historically (initially discovered pre-1983: 34 of 37 locations) documented collection sites. Two of the three historical sites considered extant are included as a “best case scenario” since investigations or surveys have not been conducted for the species at these locations. The species may very well have disappeared from these locations as well. A total of six recent new sites have been initially documented since 1983. Of these sites, 50% (3 of 6) are considered extirpated, and an additional 33% (2 of 6) are located in a heavily disturbed industrial/urbanized landscape making future viability uncertain (these sites are considered extant in this analysis). Presently, of the 43 total sites that have been adequately documented as valid collection locations in this Commonwealth, only 14% (6 of 43) are considered extant. Suitable habitats in the vicinity of all but two of the historical collection locations (single sites in Chester and Franklin Counties have not been investigated since their initial discovery, but are considered extant in this analysis as a best case scenario) have been investigated in the last fifteen years, thus documenting a significant (86%) population reduction for this species in this Commonwealth in the last 20 years, which meets listing criterion A.1.: Range Reduction of >80% in the last 20 years. The Area of Occupancy for Northern Cricket Frog in this Commonwealth is under 4 square miles (Listing Criterion B.2) and severely fragmented (Listing Criterion B.2.a). Additionally, declines are projected in the area of occupancy, area/extent/and or quality of habitat, number of locations or subpopulations, and number of mature individuals (Listing Criterion B.2.b).

The Amphibian and Reptile Technical Committee of PABS reviewed the Heritage rank of the Northern Cricket frog and recommended it be changed to “critically imperiled” (S1) – critically imperiled in the state because of extreme rarity or because of some factors making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the state. As the species meets Listing Criteria A.1. and B.2., the Committee recommended the status of the Northern Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*) be elevated to endangered. **Therefore, given the apparent rarity and threats to the statewide population, and multiple listing criteria met, the Northern Cricket Frog should be added to the list of endangered species.**

The Blue-spotted Salamander complex (including associated hybrids) is a peripheral species to this Commonwealth with all known populations being found in northern tier counties bordering the states of New Jersey and New York: the Delaware River

drainage (Northampton County), and the Allegheny River drainage (McKean County and Warren County).

The Blue-spotted Salamander was not discovered in this Commonwealth until April of 2000. The Blue-spotted Salamander probably did not recently colonize this Commonwealth; rather this species had likely escaped detection due to locations being situated in fairly rural areas and general similarity in appearance to the Jefferson Salamander. This species was not detected during the seven-year long Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas project.

The Blue-spotted Salamander was first discovered in McKean County (Allegheny River drainage) during the spring of 2000 as part of a distribution-wide survey for the Jefferson Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*) and Blue-spotted Salamander complex (Bogart and Klemens 2008, Ruhe unpublished). Two additional populations were subsequently found in Northampton (Delaware River drainage) and Warren (Allegheny River drainage) Counties (Bogart and Klemens 2008, Ruhe unpublished). The Northampton County population was discovered in October 2003, and the Warren County population in October 2008 (Ruhe unpublished).

The known extent of occurrence for the Blue-spotted Salamander in this Commonwealth encompasses an area of under 3 square miles, qualifying the species for listing as endangered under listing criterion B. 1. (Extent of Occurrence <40 mi<sup>2</sup>). As the Blue-spotted Salamander meets this criterion, the Amphibian and Reptile Technical Committee of PABS recommends that the Blue-spotted Salamander be listed as an endangered species. **Therefore, based upon the limited range of the species within the Commonwealth, the small number of known sites and threats to these sites, the Blue-Spotted Salamander should be added to the list of endangered species.**