

NEWS RELEASE

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Island fox photos available for download at https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/

Recovery Efforts Bring Endangered Fox Back from the Brink of Extinction in Record Time

Final Recovery Plan Released and Status Reviews Initiated for Endangered Island Fox

VENTURA – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released the [final Recovery Plan](#) for four subspecies of island fox (*Urocyon littoralis*). The Service is also initiating [status reviews](#) of each subspecies - San Miguel Island fox (*U. l. littoralis*), Santa Rosa Island fox (*U. l. santarosae*), Santa Cruz Island fox (*U. l. santacruzae*) and Santa Catalina Island fox (*U. l. catalinae*) – to determine if any of the subspecies warrant consideration for reclassification or removal from the list of Federally Threatened and Endangered Species.

“Due to the remarkable success of the Endangered Species Act, recovery actions by land managers and conservation partners have led to dramatic population increases on all four islands since listing, effectively bringing the species back from the brink of extinction,” said Steve Henry, field supervisor of the Service’s [Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office](#). “To date, it appears that this is the fastest population rebound due to recovery actions and ESA protections for any land mammal in the United States.”

The [Recovery Plan](#) serves as a blueprint for conservation partners and land managers to prevent or address threats to island fox subspecies, and outlines proven methods to ensure the subspecies’ long-term viability in the wild. The plan was developed in partnership with the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy and the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy, with input from scientific experts, state and local governments and private organizations.

The release of the final Recovery Plan and initiation of status reviews are the first steps towards the ultimate goal for removal from the list of Federally Threatened and Endangered Species.

[Channel Islands National Park](#) Superintendent Russell Galipeau said, “It is rewarding to know that the dedication of so many scientists, veterinarians, and community members has been instrumental in saving this endangered species.”

On March 5, 2004, four of the six subspecies of island fox endemic to the California Channel Islands were listed as federally endangered under the ESA following catastrophic population declines caused by golden eagle predation and a canine distemper disease outbreak.

"While the island fox still faces a multitude of threats on Catalina Island, we see this as an example of how a well-managed recovery effort can make a tremendous impact on an endangered or threatened species prospects for long-term survival," said Julie King, the [Catalina Island Conservancy](#)'s director of conservation and wildlife management.

Conservation partners implemented immediate conservation actions to address these threats and prevent the subspecies' extinction. A captive breeding program played an integral role in recovery efforts, which was initiated in 1999 and ended in 2008 with all captive foxes being returned to the wild. Additionally, golden eagles and their non-native prey bases were removed from the northern Channel Islands and bald eagles were re-established to their historic territories. Foxes were also vaccinated to prevent the spread of canine distemper.

“The collaboration that made this so successful is as much a model for other recovery efforts as the innovative and rigorous science foundation that underpinned the plan,” said Dr. Scott Morrison, [The Nature Conservancy](#)'s director of science in California.

The table below shows population estimates from 1994, 1999/2000 and 2012/2013.

Table: Estimated number of wild adult and juvenile island foxes for each subspecies.

Island/Subspecies	1994	1999/2000	2012/2013
San Miguel	450	15	577
Santa Rosa	1780	15	894
Santa Cruz	1465	55	1354
Santa Catalina	1342	103	1852

How to Submit Status Review Comments

A Notice of Availability for the final Recovery Plan and Notice of Initiation of Status Reviews for the four subspecies of island fox appeared in the Federal Register on March 9, 2015. During the status review process, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting all new information, including scientific and commercial data that may be available since the listing determination. Any new information will also be useful in evaluating the ongoing recovery programs for the species. Any person may submit new information to the Service related to:

- (A) Species biology, including but not limited to population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics;
- (B) Habitat conditions, including but not limited to amount, distribution, and suitability;
- (C) Conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species;
- (D) Threat status and trends in relation to the five listing factors (as defined in section 4(a) (1) of the Act); and
- (E) Other new information, data, or corrections, including but not limited to taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the List, and improved analytical methods.

New information may be submitted via email to fw8islandfox@fws.gov or by mail to the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003. Input and comments will be accepted until May 8, 2015.

Upon completion of the status reviews, the Service may make the determination to publish a proposed rule to change one or more of the subspecies' statuses under the ESA. If warranted, a final rule would be published within approximately one year of the proposed rule.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species and promoted the recovery of many others, including America's national bird the bald eagle.

Established in 1987, the [Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office](#) works to conserve and protect threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants across the central and southern California coast, collaborating with communities and conservation partners to build a future that supports both people and our unique and diverse natural resources.

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