



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
510 Desmond Dr. SE, Suite 102
Lacey, Washington 98503

April 8, 2019

Dear Interested Party:

Subject: Mt. Rainier White-tailed Ptarmigan Status Assessment; Request for Information

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is conducting a status review of the Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura rainierensis*) to determine if listing the species as threatened or endangered, and designating critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) (Act), is warranted. We request information on the species to help with this determination.

Background

In response to a petition to list the Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan and designate critical habitat for the species under the Act, we published a 90-day finding (77 FR 33143). The finding concluded that listing and critical habitat designation may be warranted based on potential threats from the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the species' habitat or range as a result of the habitat changes brought about by climate change, depressed population growth rates, and the physiological response of the species to climate warming.

The white-tailed ptarmigan is endemic to alpine habitats in western North America and is the only species of ptarmigan whose range extends south of Canada. The Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan is known to occur on Mt. Rainier and areas north of there in the Cascade Mountains of Washington but is not known to inhabit areas south of there. Please see the 90-day finding (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2012-06-05/pdf/2012-13320.pdf>) for more information regarding the species and its habitat.

Requested Information

For this review of the Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan, we seek the latest scientific information on the subspecies. Please note that it is not necessary to resubmit information provided to us previously or used as part of our 90-day finding. We are requesting additional information on any of the following topics, including but not limited to:

1. Distribution, genetics, population sizes, population trends, and results and analysis from the most recent occupancy surveys;
2. Updates to the subspecies' historical, overall, or predicted ranges, including any information about their range that was not reflected in the 90-day finding;

3. Data documenting any Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan monitoring efforts, including in areas not within the known range of the subspecies;
4. Any information on the potential physiological effects associated with increased ambient air temperatures or other climate-related environmental changes;
5. Information on alpine and willow vegetation communities, including the quality and quantity of white-tailed ptarmigan summer and winter habitat;
6. Other potential threats to the subspecies or its habitat including, but not limited to, recreation, grazing, mining, hunting, disease, predation, population isolation, or limited dispersal;
7. Any updates to laws, regulations, or policies that may apply to the subspecies; and,
8. Ongoing conservation efforts for the subspecies or its habitat.

Contact Information

We request that you provide any information by May 17, 2019, to ensure we have adequate time to consider it during the status review. Please notify and submit any relevant information either via email at WFWO_LR@fws.gov, or at the address in the letterhead above. All data and information submitted, including names and addresses, will become part of the decisional file and may be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests.

If we determine that the Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan is warranted for listing and we develop a listing and critical habitat proposal, we will provide a public notification of our finding in the Federal Register. Any associated proposed rulemakings would include an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the proposal(s). At this time, we expect to deliver notification to the Federal Register by late summer in 2020.

Thank you for your continued interest in the conservation of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Terry Frederick at 360-753-4320, or by email at Teresa_Frederick@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Brad Thompson, Acting State Supervisor
Washington Fish and Wildlife Office