

THANKS FOR ALL OF YOUR HELP

Action: Please send a letter to show your support by April 4, 2005.

On February 1, 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the Salt Creek tiger beetle (*Cicindela nevadica lincolniiana*) as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The beetle is only found in a few remnant saline marshes near Lincoln, Nebraska. The salt creek tiger beetle is one of the rarest insects in the world and occupies one of the most restricted ranges of any insect in the United States.

The Salt Creek tiger beetle is an active, ground-dwelling, predatory insect that captures other arthropods in a "tiger-like" manner by grasping prey with its mandibles (mouthparts). It has distinctive markings and is metallic brown to dark olive green above with a metallic dark green underside.

Since the late 1800s, over 90 percent of the Salt Creek tiger beetle's saline marsh habitat has been destroyed or severely degraded through commercial, residential, industrial, and agricultural development and road projects. Only 122 acres of habitat remain, of which merely 15 acres can be considered "not highly degraded."

Since 1991 the number of remaining Salt Creek tiger beetle populations has fallen by half: from six to three populations. Surveys conducted in 2004 revealed that the beetle numbers fewer than 600 individuals.

The remaining populations of Salt Creek tiger beetles are threatened by:

- habitat loss and degradation due to development;
- increased freshwater runoff and sediment from urban areas, which lowers the salt content in the water and encourages weed encroachment;
- pollution;
- pesticide application or runoff; and
- habitat loss and degradation due to grazing and cultivation.

Because of its small population size and limited habitat, the beetle is also more prone to extinction from catastrophic environmental events such as floods, drought, predation, and parasites.

The Salt Creek tiger beetle is considered an "indicator" species. Its presence signals the existence of a healthy saline marsh - the groundwater feeding these wetlands pass through rock formations containing salts deposited by an ancient sea that once covered Nebraska. Over the past century, more than 230 species of birds have been reported using eastern Nebraska saline marshes, including the least tern, piping plover, and peregrine falcon. These saline wetlands are also home to several salt-adapted plants that are found nowhere else in Nebraska. Included in this flora is saltwort, which is listed as endangered under the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act. In addition, a

healthy saline marsh provides numerous benefits for people, including water purification and flood control.

University of Nebraska entomologists along with local conservation groups, the USFWS, the State of Nebraska, and the City of Lincoln have been working to survey, study and protect habitat for the beetle since it was listed by the state as an endangered species in 2000. Federal protection under the Endangered Species Act will allow development of a recovery plan and additional funding for survey and protection efforts.

With populations so low and habitat so scarce, the Salt Creek tiger beetle needs both state and federal protection.

How you can help:

Contact the USFWS and let them know you support Endangered Species Act listing for the Salt Creek Tiger beetle. When you send your message, please use the points above to make your argument for this species' protection.

Send comments to:

Nebraska Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
203 West Second Street
Federal Building, Second Floor
Grand Island, Nebraska 68801.

E-mail address: fw6_sctbeetle@fws.gov