

CDFW seeks public comment related to bumble bees

December 24, 2022



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is seeking data and public comments on a petition to list the Crotch's bumble bee, Franklin's bumble bee, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee and western bumble bee under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

The Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) is found between San Diego and Redding in a variety of habitats including open grasslands, shrublands, chaparral, desert margins including Joshua tree and creosote scrub, and semi-urban settings. It is near endemic to California, with only a few records from Nevada and Mexico.

The Franklin's bumble bee (*Bombus franklini*) has the smallest range of any bumble bee in North America, occurring only in northern California and southern Oregon. In California, it historically occurred in Siskiyou and Trinity counties in grasslands and meadows ranging from 540 to 7,800 feet in elevation. It has not been observed in California since 1998 or in Oregon since 2006.

The western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis occidentalis*) ranges broadly from northern Mexico to central British Columbia, Canada. In California, it historically occurred from sea level to over 8,000 feet and was found in a variety of habitat types including shrublands, chaparral, gardens and urban parks. It currently is

observed in high elevation meadows, forests, riparian areas in the Sierra Nevada and Cascades as well as in coastal grasslands in northern California.

The Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) is a nest parasite of the western bumble bee. The range of the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee is limited to a subset of its host's range, though with a more montane distribution in the Cascades, with a possibility of occurrence in the Sierra Nevada based on limited historic records.

Threats to all these bumble bees include habitat loss, climate change, disease and exposure to pesticides. Small population size is also a potential threat to the Franklin's bumble bee. For the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, threats include the decline of its host species.

In October 2018, the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Defenders of Wildlife and Center for Food Safety submitted a petition to the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) to list the Crotch's, Franklin's, Suckley's cuckoo and western bumble bee species as Endangered under CESA. The Commission determined listing "may be warranted" and the species became candidates for listing on June 12, 2019. That listing was legally challenged and candidacy was stayed during much of the ensuing litigation. The Commission's decision was ultimately upheld and candidacy was reinstated on September 30, 2022. Thus, the Crotch's, Franklin's, Suckley's cuckoo and western bumble bee species now have the same legal protection afforded to an endangered or threatened species (California Fish and Game Code [FGC] sections 2074.2 and 2085).

Over the next 12 months, CDFW will conduct a status review to inform the Commission's final decision on whether to list the species under CESA. As part of the status review process, CDFW is soliciting information regarding the species' ecology, genetics, life history, distribution, abundance, habitat, the degree and immediacy of threats to its reproduction or survival, the adequacy of existing management and recommendations for management of the species.

CDFW respectfully requests that data and comments be submitted before January 15, 2023. Please submit data and comments to CDFW by email at wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov and include "Bumble bee" in the subject line. Data or comments may also be submitted by mail to California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Diversity Program, Attn: CESA Conservation Unit, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090.

CDFW will produce a peer reviewed report based upon the best scientific information available, which will include a recommendation as to whether the petitioned action is warranted (FGC section 2074.6). The report will be made publicly available on CDFW's website for at least 30 days before the Commission considers acting on the petition. Please note, the Commission—which is a legally separate entity from CDFW—is charged with making the final determination on whether to list a species as endangered or threatened under CESA (FGC section 2075.5). CDFW serves in a scientific advisory role to the Commission during this process. See the California Fish and Game Commission webpage for details on submitting comments to the Commission and receiving email alerts for upcoming Commission meetings.

The listing petition, CDFW's petition evaluation report and updates on the listing process are available on the Commission's website.