

# Heritage Rank Definitions

The Alabama Natural Heritage Program uses the Heritage ranking system developed by NatureServe. Each species is assigned two ranks; one representing its range-wide or global status (G rank), and one representing its status in the state (S rank). Species with a rank of 1 are most critically imperiled; those with a rank of 5 are most secure. Rank numbers may be combined when there is uncertainty over the status, but ranges cannot skip more than one rank (e.g., an element may be given a G-rank of G2G3, indicating global status is somewhere between imperiled and vulnerable).

## Global Ranking System

- G1 Critically Imperiled – At very high risk of extinction due to extreme rarity (often 5 or fewer populations), very steep declines, or other factors.
- G2 Imperiled – At high risk of extinction due to very restricted range, very few populations (often 20 or fewer), steep declines, or other factors.
- G3 Vulnerable – At moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.
- G4 Apparently Secure – Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.
- G5 Secure – Common; widespread and abundant.
- GX Presumed Extinct (species) – Not located despite intensive searches and virtually no likelihood of rediscovery.  
Eliminated (ecological communities) – Eliminated throughout its range, with no restoration potential due to extinction of dominant or characteristic species.
- GH Of historical occurrence throughout its range.  
Possibly Extinct (species) – Missing; known from only historical occurrences but still some hope of rediscovery.  
Presumed Eliminated – (Historic, ecological communities)-Presumed eliminated throughout its range, with no or virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered, but with the potential for restoration, for example, American Chestnut Forest.
- GU Unrankable – Currently unrankable due to lack of information or due to substantially conflicting information about status or trends.
- GNR Not ranked to date.
- G#T# Intraspecific Taxon (trinomial) – The status of infraspecific taxa (subspecies or varieties) are indicated by a "T-rank" following the species' global rank. Rules for assigning T-ranks follow the same principles outlined above for global conservation status ranks. A T-rank cannot imply the subspecies or variety is more abundant than the species as a whole- for example, a G1T2 cannot occur. At this time, the T rank is not used for ecological communities.

## State Ranking System

- S1 Critically imperiled - Critically imperiled in Alabama because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences of very few remaining individuals or acres) or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from Alabama.
- S2 Imperiled - Imperiled in state because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation from Alabama.
- S3 Vulnerable - Rare or uncommon in Alabama (on the order of 21 to 100 occurrences).
- S4 Apparently Secure - Apparently secure in Alabama, with many occurrences.
- S5 Secure - Demonstrably secure in Alabama; common, widespread, and abundant in the state.
- SX Presumed Extirpated – Species or community is believed to be extirpated from Alabama. Not located despite intensive searches of historical sites and other appropriate habitat, and virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered.
- SH Historical (Possibly Extirpated) – Species or community occurred historically in Alabama, and there is some possibility that it may be rediscovered. Its presence may not have been verified in the past 20-40 years. A species or community could become SH without such a 20-40 year delay if the only known occurrences in a nation or state/province were destroyed or if it had been extensively and unsuccessfully looked for. The SH rank is reserved for species or communities for which some effort has been made to relocate occurrences, rather than simply using this status for all elements not known from verified extant occurrences.
- SNR Unranked – State conservation status not yet assessed.
- SNA A conservation status rank is not applicable because the species is not a suitable target for conservation activities in the state. <sup>1</sup>
- SU Unrankable – Currently unrankable due to lack of information or due to substantially conflicting information about status or trends.
- SE An exotic established in Alabama.

## Variant Ranks and Rank Modifiers

**G#G# Range Rank** – A numeric range rank (e.g., G2G3) is used to indicate the range of uncertainty in the status of a species or community (e.g., an element may be given a G-rank of G2G3, indicating global status is somewhere between imperiled and vulnerable). Ranges cannot skip more than one rank (e.g., GU should be used rather than G1G4). Also applies to state ranks (e.g., S2S3)

**HYB Hybrid**

**Q Questionable taxonomy** – Taxonomic distinctiveness of this entity at the current level is questionable; resolution of this uncertainty may result in change from a species to a subspecies or hybrid, or the inclusion of this taxon in another taxon, with the resulting taxon having a lower-priority conservation priority.

**? Inexact Numeric Rank** – Denotes inexact numeric rank (e.g., G2?)

## Breeding Status Qualifiers<sup>2</sup>

**B Breeding** - Conservation status refers to the breeding population of the species in the state. Regularly occurring, usually migratory and may be present only during the breeding season.

**N Nonbreeding** - Conservation status refers to the non-breeding population of the species in the state. Regularly occurring, usually migratory and may not breed in Alabama; this category includes migratory birds, bats, sea turtles, and cetaceans.

**M Migrant** - Migrant species occurring regularly on migration at particular staging areas or concentration spots where the species might warrant conservation attention. Conservation status refers to the aggregating transient population of the species in the nation or state/province.

<sup>1</sup> A conservation status rank may be not applicable for some species, including long distance aerial and aquatic migrants, hybrids without conservation value, and non-native species or ecosystems, for several reason

<sup>2</sup> A breeding status is only used for species that have distinct breeding and/or non-breeding populations in the state. A breeding-status S-rank can be coupled with its complementary non-breeding-status S-rank if the species also winters in the state. In addition, a breeding-status S-rank can also be coupled with a migrant-status S-rank if, on migration, the species occurs regularly at particular staging areas or concentration spots where it might warrant conservation attention. Multiple conservation status ranks (typically two, or rarely three) are separated by commas (e.g., S2B,S3N or SHN,S4B,S1M).

For more information regarding Conservation Status Ranks, see <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/ranking.htm#globalstatus>

# Federal Status Definitions

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Endangered Species Act (U.S. ESA) is the primary legislation that affords federal legal protections to threatened and endangered species in the United States, and is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (<http://endangered.fws.gov/>) and U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) ([http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/overview/es.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/overview/es.html)). As defined by the Act, endangered refers to species that are "in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range," while threatened refers to "those animals and plants likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges." Plant species and varieties (including fungi and lichens), animal species and subspecies, and vertebrate animal populations are eligible for listing under the Act. Status under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in data provided by ALNHP is based on formal notices published by USFWS or NMFS in the Federal Register. Where names used by the USFWS differ from those used by ALNHP, ALNHP records include notes indicating under what name the USFWS lists the species and how that relates to the name used by ALNHP.

### ESA Status Definitions

- LE Listed Endangered: A species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- LT Listed Threatened: A species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- PE Proposed Endangered: A species proposed to be listed as endangered.
- PT Proposed Threatened: A species proposed to be listed as threatened.
- PS Status: An infraspecific taxon or population has federal status but the entire species does not-- status is in only a portion of the species range.
- C Candidate: A species for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has on file enough substantial information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support proposals to list them as endangered or threatened. Development and publication of proposed rules on Candidate taxa are anticipated, and USFWS encourages other agencies to give consideration to such taxa in environmental planning.
- XN Experimental Population, Nonessential: Experimental reintroduced population.
- SAT Similarity of Appearance to a Threatened Taxon: A species that is threatened due to similarity of appearance with another listed species and is listed for its protection. Species listed as SAT are not biologically endangered or threatened and are not subject to Section 7 consultation.
- SC Species of Concern – Species that have not been petitioned or been given Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate status, but have been identified as important to monitor. (Informal status with no regulatory requirements.)

# State Status Definitions

## Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Alabama does not have a state law equivalent to the federal endangered species act so species do not have regulatory protection as state endangered or threatened species. However, some species do receive regulatory protection through the *Alabama Regulations on Game Fish and Fur Bearing Animals* published annually. These are the primary regulations affording state protection for some species in Alabama, and are administered by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Copies of these regulations may be obtained from the Division of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries, Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, 64 North Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104. A digital version of these regulations is available online at <http://www.outdooralabama.com/hunting/regulations/>. The Nongame Species Regulation (Section 220-2-.92) is also available online at: <http://www.outdooralabama.com/watchable-wildlife/regulations/nongame.cfm>.

### State Status Code Definitions

- SP State Protected: Species protected by Regulation 220-2-.92 (Nongame Species Regulation), 220-2-.98 (Invertebrate Species Regulation), 220-2-.26(4) (Protection of Sturgeon), 220-2-.94 (Prohibition of Taking or Possessing Paddlefish), or 220-2-.97 (Alligator Protection Regulation).
- PSM Partial Status Mussels: All mussel species not listed as a protected species under the Invertebrate Species Regulation are partially protected by other regulations of the Alabama Game, Fish, and Fur Bearing Animals Regulations. Regulation 220-2-.104 prohibits the commercial harvest of all but the 11 mussel species for which commercial harvest is legal. Regulation 220-2-.52 prohibits the take, capture, kill, or attempt to take, capture, or kill of any freshwater mussel from Wheeler Lake from Guntersville Dam downstream to the mouth of Shoal Creek and from the upstream end or head of Hobbs Island downstream to Whitesburg Bridge, Pickwick Lake from Wilson Dam downstream to the upper end or head of Seven Mile Island, Wilson Lake from Wheeler Dam downstream to the mouth of Town Creek on the south bank and the mouth of Bluewater Creek on the north bank, and the Cahaba River.
- CHM Commercially Harvestable Mussel - Legal to Take for Commercial Purposes (Managed commercial harvest regulations).
- RT Regulated Turtle: Species for which the Turtle Catcher/Dealer/Farmer Regulation (Regulation 220-2-.142) imposes a limit on the number which can be possessed or size limits.
- GA Game Animal (Managed hunting regulations).
- GA-SP Game Animal - Special Permit Only (Managed hunting regulations).
- GANOS Game Animal - No Open Season: Species designated a game animal by Regulation 220-2-.07, but for which there is no open season.

- GB Game Bird (Managed hunting regulations).
- GBNOS Game Bird - No Open Season: Species designated a game bird by Regulation 220-2-.04, but for which there is no open season.
- FB Fur-bearing Animal (Managed trapping regulations).
- GF Game Fish (Managed fishing regulations).
- GF-HP Game Fish - Harvest Prohibited: Species designated a game fish by Regulation 220-2-.34, but harvest of the species in the state is prohibited.
- CNGF Commercial or Non-Game Fish (Managed fishing regulations).

## State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Status Definitions

In order to receive funds through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grants Program, Congress charged each state and territory with developing a wildlife action plan. These proactive plans, known technically as “comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies,” assess the health of each state’s wildlife and habitats, identify the problems they face, and outline the actions that are needed to conserve them over the long term. The wildlife action plans identify a variety of actions aimed at preventing wildlife from declining to the point of becoming endangered, and outline the steps that are needed to conserve wildlife and habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect. One component of the plan was identifying Species of Greatest Conservation Need (GCN). Species were assigned a status based on the expert opinion of taxa committees.

### SWAP Status Code Definitions

- P1 Priority 1/Highest Conservation Concern: taxa critically imperiled and at risk of extinction/extirpation because of extreme rarity, restricted distribution, decreasing population trend/population viability problems, and specialized habitat needs/habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Immediate research and/or conservation action required.
- P2 Priority 2/High Conservation Concern: taxa imperiled because of three of four of the following: rarity; very limited, disjunct, or peripheral distribution; decreasing population trend/population viability problems; specialized habitat needs/habitat vulnerability due to natural/human-caused factors. Timely research and/or conservation action needed.
- EX Extirpated: taxa that historically occurred in Alabama, but are now absent; may be rediscovered in the state, or be reintroduced from populations existing outside the state.
- EXCAU Extirpated/Conservation Action Underway: taxa that historically occurred in Alabama, were absent for a period of time, and currently are being reintroduced, or have a plan for being reintroduced, into the state from populations outside the state.
- Extinct Extinct: taxa that historically occurred in Alabama, but are no longer alive anywhere within their former distribution.