

## NEWS RELEASE

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Gunnison Sage-grouse Makes Top 10 List of Species in Need of Protection**

Denver, Colo. – The Gunnison Sage-grouse is among the top ten species most in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), according to a report released today by the Endangered Species Coalition. The report, *Without a Net: Top Ten Wildlife, Fish and Plants in Need of Endangered Species Act Protection*, demonstrates the need to reinvigorate the ESA listing process to protect imperiled species, and documents the convoluted process and political interference that prevented the Gunnison Sage-grouse from being listed under the ESA in 2006.

“The Gunnison Sage-grouse is an obvious addition to the top ten list,” said Mark Salvo, director of the Sagebrush Sea Campaign for WildEarth Guardians. “The species would already be listed if not for the Bush Administration’s undue influence on the listing decision.”

The Gunnison Sage-grouse is a distinct species from Greater Sage-grouse. While its historic range may have included parts of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona, the species now occurs only in eight small populations in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah. Gunnison Sage-grouse have experienced significant declines from historic numbers and only about 4,000 breeding individuals remain.

“The survival of the Gunnison Sage-grouse is critical to the biodiversity of rural San Miguel County,” said Joan May, San Miguel County Commissioner. “Many organizations and individuals are working tirelessly to protect the Gunnison Sage-grouse and its habitat, but without the important endangered species designation there is virtually no hope for the species.”

Livestock grazing, energy development, motorized recreation, and development threaten Gunnison Sage-grouse. Severe drought in recent years has exacerbated the effects of these human impacts. West Nile virus, a disease that is fatal to Greater Sage-grouse, has also been discovered in Gunnison sage-grouse range.

“The Bush administration has long ignored strong scientific evidence that the Gunnison sage-grouse is on the fast-track to extinction,” said Megan Mueller, staff biologist with Center for Native Ecosystems. “The new Obama administration should act quickly to protect the Gunnison sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act, before this unique part of Colorado’s natural heritage is lost forever.”

San Miguel County, Colorado, and a coalition of conservation organizations advocate listing Gunnison Sage-grouse under the ESA, including Black Canyon Audubon Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Native Ecosystems, The Larch Company, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Sheep Mountain Alliance, and WildEarth Guardians.

A factsheet on Gunnison sage-grouse is available at  
[www.sagebrushsea.org/pdf/Gunnison\\_Grouse\\_Factsheet.PDF](http://www.sagebrushsea.org/pdf/Gunnison_Grouse_Factsheet.PDF).

## About the Report

Wildlife, fish and plants considered for the *Without a Net* report were nominated by conservation organizations from around the country. A panel of scientists and advocates selected the final ten species, and identified three more for honorable mention. The highlighted species are:

1. Pacific Walrus
2. Red Knot (*rufa* subspecies)
3. Wolverine
4. Gunnison Sage-grouse
5. Fluvial Arctic Grayling
6. Island Marble Butterfly
7. Southern Rockies Boreal Toad
8. Mason's Skypilot
9. Great White Shark
10. Wood Turtle

Honorable Mention: Sand Dune Lizard, Grahams Penstemon, and the western population of the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl.

The full report and information on each species is available online at [www.StopExtinction.org](http://www.StopExtinction.org).

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