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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

Species facing threats to their survival

Saluda crayfish (a.k.a. Newberry burrowing crayfish) (*Distocambarus youngineri*)



Saluda crayfish/South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Description

The Saluda crayfish is a small species of crayfish, 50 mm (2 in.) in total length, with small pigmented and faceted eyes. The rostrum (head section) is broad and rounded and lacks spines. The chelae (claws) are strongly depressed and the palm is studded with squamous tubercles (nodules).

Range

A very rare obligate burrower, this crayfish is known only from Newberry County, South Carolina. It has been found at a total of 19 collection sites, primarily within a portion of the Saluda River Basin but also at one site within the Broad River Basin. One location where this species was found was in Sumter National Forest; however, the majority of its occurrences are found on private land. Searches in several other nearby counties have not located any additional populations.

Habitat

The Saluda crayfish is found in moist, terrestrial areas with leaf litter and a mixed-hardwood overstory, usually near stream headwaters or intermittent streams. Although it is found in the general area of

headwater streams, it is not found very close to streambanks and does not appear to be directly associated with streams themselves.

Status

NatureServe identifies the Saluda crayfish as critically endangered in South Carolina (S1) and globally (G1). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and published a substantial 90-day finding in September 2011 indicating listing may be warranted.



Watersheds and spatial distribution of Distocambarus youngineri, A. G. Eversole, 2004 & 2014.

Threats

Intensive survey efforts only detected the species at 6 sites and it now appears that the crayfish has been extirpated from one of those sites following a clearcut. More recent surveys have found populations at

three new sites, however, all of these new locations were still within a small portion of Newberry County. Given the extremely restricted distribution and low population numbers of the Saluda crayfish, researchers are concerned about its status.

Management/Protection Needs

Updated surveys are needed for the species. Monitor known populations to determine if they are in decline, stable or increasing. Develop and conduct landowner and general education programs that stress the unique nature of terrestrial burrowing crayfish and their importance in South Carolina. Land that this species inhabits should be protected, since its restricted distribution makes it so vulnerable.

References

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NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources—State Wildlife Action Plan: 2010-2015.

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