

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Berry Cave Salamander

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The Berry Cave salamander is found in only nine caves in eastern Tennessee. It faces threats from urban development near those caves, water contamination, and hybridization with spring salamanders.

The Endangered Species Act allows anyone to petition to add a species to the federal endangered species list. If the information provided indicates the plant or animal may need protection, the Service will investigate further. In 2003, Dr. John Nolt, a professor at the University of Tennessee, filed a petition to list the Berry Cave salamander on the endangered species list. Earlier this spring, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service completed a review of the information available about the salamander, finding that the salamander's situation did warrant inclusion on the endangered species list. However, due to limited funding which is focused on species at greater risk, the Service placed the salamander on its list of candidate species for federal protection. The salamander's addition to the Candidate List means its status will be reviewed annually and, barring an improvement in its status, when funding becomes available it will be added to the endangered species list.

Eight of the caves where the salamander is found are within the Upper Tennessee River and Clinch River drainages, and one cave is in McMinn County in southeast Tennessee. This salamander is unusual among salamanders in that it normally doesn't mature into the adult form, rather reaching reproductive maturity in their larval form.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.