

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot Butterfly

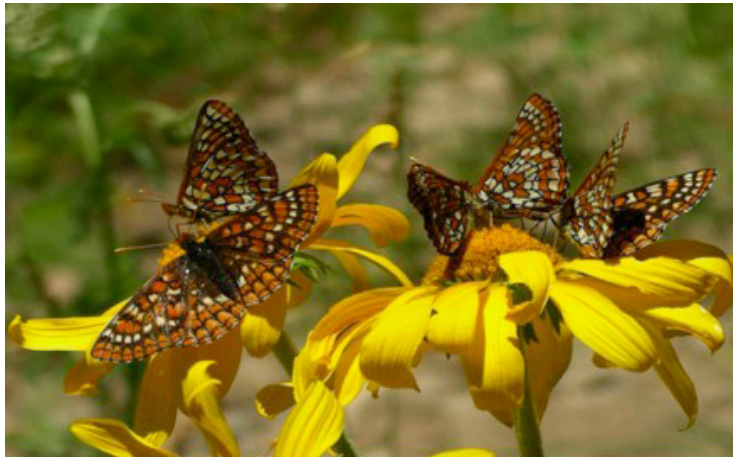


Photo: Julie McIntyre, US Fish & Wildlife Service

A TROUBLED BUTTERFLY

The Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot Butterfly occurs on only 2,000 acres in the Sacramento Mountains of New Mexico, all within a six-mile radius of the Village of Cloudcroft. The federal government proposed this rare butterfly for listing in 2001, but withdrew that proposal in 2004 and has refused legal safeguards ever since. Without federal protection, we may lose the Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot Butterfly forever.

PROTECTING MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

Since this fragile butterfly occurs only in mountain meadows within mixed conifer forests at elevations above 7,800 feet, the threats it faces include climate change, pesticide spraying, livestock grazing, and off-road vehicles. If listed under the Endangered Species Act, the Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot Butterfly would be given habitat protections that will not only ensure its survival for future generations, but would also protect and restore meadows within its range.

KNOW YOUR BUTTERFLY

- **A One-Plant Kind of Animal:** while adults find nectar on a variety of plants (especially sneezeweed), the only known host plant for their eggs is the rare New Mexico penstemon.
- **Public or Private:** about half the butterfly's habitat is on the public land of the Lincoln National Forest and half is on private land.
- **Pesticide Risk:** Cloudcroft's forests have experienced a severe outbreak in looper caterpillars in recent years. Some people have responded by spraying a pesticide that can kill checkerspots as well as the loopers.

CLIMATE CHAOS

Climate change brings with it a host of dangers for this butterfly, from extended drought to shifts in the range of either the butterfly or its only known host plant. If the range of either shifts even slightly, the butterfly will likely disappear forever in the blink of an eye.

