

Threatened and Endangered Species

Currently, the Cherokee National Forest is home to 182 Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species. There are several hundred additional species that are considered of viability or conservation concern on the north zone. Lists of these species can be found in the appendix of the Cherokee National Forest LRMP. Collectively, we refer to these as species of conservation concern. These species include Amphibians, Birds, Fish, Mammals, Freshwater Mussels, Snails, Reptiles, several Arthropods (Insects, Arachnids, Millipeds), and Plants (both vascular and non-vascular).

The Endangered Species Act directs all Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species. In many cases, restoration of the forested habitats the Committee assessed on the north zone of the Cherokee National Forest, using the ECAP framework, will result in positive habitat gains for species of conservation concern. However, we could not use ECAP to analyze some small-patch, discrete rare communities across the National Forest such as balds, bogs, rock outcrops, seeps and springs, which are home to a great number of the rarest species on these lists, including some federally listed species. Therefore, the Steering Committee makes the following recommendations to address the needs of species of conservation concern.

1. Emphasize restoration of rare communities across the North Zone of the Cherokee National Forest.
2. Seek opportunities for developing programmatic approaches for compliance with the Endangered Species Act and other environmental regulations in order to expedite project level reviews and minimize planning delays.
3. Use products produced by the CNFLRI process (ex. Steve Simon's ecological system mapping) in conjunction with species occurrence data and TWRA's State Wildlife Action Plan to help inform watershed level restoration planning and maximize the potential for restoration projects to benefit species of conservation concern.
4. Continue Rare Community Restoration planning efforts and develop partnerships to implement management projects to address restoration needs.