INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) conducts and maintains an inventory of known locations of rare animals and plants in the state as part of its mission to support conservation of natural areas. The primary functions of this inventory list are its use 1) in determining priorities for protection of the state's most important natural areas and the animals and plants contained therein, 2) in determining priorities for inventory, and 3) by public agencies, conservation organizations, and private persons for environmental assessment and land management planning.

The NCNHP is charged under the Nature Preserves Act (G.S. 143B-135.250 to -135.272) with compiling and maintaining information relevant to the protection of North Carolina's most important natural areas. NCNHP takes the lead role in North Carolina in the inventory of the state's natural diversity and the identification of important natural areas and rare species habitats. The list incorporates the most recent federal status designations determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for all animal taxa native to North Carolina. This list also includes North Carolina legal status information from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). NCWRC is responsible for the listing and protection of the state's nongame species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, freshwater fishes, mollusks, and crustaceans, under N.C. General Statutes - Chapter 113 Article 25. The NCNHP, NCWRC, and USFWS work cooperatively to ensure the continued survival of all of North Carolina's rich fauna.

Many species that lack formal legal protection are nonetheless imperiled in North Carolina. Therefore, NCNHP collects data on these species in addition to those classified under the protection designations of the USFWS and NCWRC and places them in two categories: Significantly Rare (SR) and Watch List (W). These species receive no special legal protection status; rather, the designation is used to convey information about the species' rarity within the state. The tracking of SR species, along with Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern species, plays a critical role in how NCNHP evaluates natural areas for their importance in conservation of the state's native biodiversity. These status categories are defined in this list under "N.C. Status."

The North Carolina Animal Watch List includes species that are rare or uncommon, are not well studied, or are otherwise threatened with serious decline but for which current information does not justify placement on the Rare List by the NCNHP. Watch List species can be indicators of significant habitats, and their presence should be considered in planning natural area protection efforts, though obviously with less weight than higher priority rare species and natural communities. The NCNHP maintains digital files on these species but does not include them in its GIS maps or database. Animals placed on this list fall into a number of categories, discussed below. The NCNHP requests additional information about these species in order to clarify their status and reclassify them into other appropriate and more specific categories. Counties of known occurrence are listed for most groups. A few groups, such as birds, are migratory, and thus counties of occurrence will be misleading.

Reasons for the current placement of species on the Watch List rather than at a high rarity status (Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern, or Significantly Rare) vary. The taxonomic validity of some of these species is currently in doubt. For many of them, the NCNHP lacks adequate documentation of their historic or present extent in North Carolina; this is especially true for invertebrates. Others are known to be rare or uncommon in North Carolina but may not be native to the state, and they may or may not be declining. Some others may not necessarily be rare yet, but they are undergoing significant losses of or disturbances to their habitats.

Because of the difficulty in gathering data for marine and estuarine fishes, marine invertebrates, millipedes, scorpionflies, most beetles, ants, and annelids, these animals are no longer tracked or included on the Rare or Watch lists.

NCNHP requests your assistance in acquiring locality and population data on the species listed in this publication - data contribution forms can be filled out on our website (https://www.ncnhp.org/share-data/contribute-nhp-database).

For the most current information about the range of tracked species in North Carolina, visit the Species/Community Search tool (https://www.ncnhp.org/data/speciescommunity-search). Information, including maps and datasets, on animals, plants, and communities nationwide may be found on NatureServe Explorer (www.natureserve.org).

LIST FORMAT

Species are grouped by major taxa. Vertebrate animals are arranged by class, beginning with the most phylogenetically advanced (mammals). Within a given taxon, species are listed alphabetically by scientific name. The following information is presented for each species on the list: N.C. Status, U.S. Status, N.C. Rank, Global Rank, Physiographic Province/Region, Habitat, and Counties of Occurrence.