

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Dr. Thomas Eason, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation

Date: December 6, 2017

Subject: Consent Agenda -- Listing Status of 4 Species of Special Concern

Purpose:

Staff will provide the Biological Status Reports and listing recommendations for four state-listed Species of Special Concern.

Summary:

In 2010, as part of the updated listing process for state listed species, state listed species underwent status reviews using the listing criteria found in Chapter 68A-27, F.A.C. The harlequin darter, Homosassa shrew, osprey (Monroe county population) and the Sherman's fox squirrel were determined to be data deficient and they were therefore maintained as Species of Special Concern (SSC) until additional data could be obtained. Staff initiated studies to address the data gaps identified in the status reviews and the Species Action Plans for each of these species. Additionally, Objective 1 of the Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP), approved in November 2016, identifies the need to collect data and conduct status reviews for these remaining Species of Special Concern by 2017. In July of 2017, the Commission appointed four Biological Review Groups to assess the status of these species, and each of these groups met in August 2017.

The Biological Review Groups for the harlequin darter, Homosassa shrew, and Sherman's fox squirrel determined that these species did not meet any criteria for listing as state Threatened species. During the biological assessment, the Biological Review Group found that the Monroe County osprey, when considered at only the county level, met at least one listing criterion. In the Regional Assessment, however, the Group concluded that Monroe County osprey are not genetically distinct from osprey elsewhere in Florida based on results from a recent study (Dellinger et al. 2016). The Biological Status Reports (BSRs) summarize the findings and provide the staff recommendations to not list any of the four species as State Threatened and to remove all four species from the Species of Special Concern list. The BSR for each species was independently reviewed by a minimum of three experts, all of whom concurred with the findings and the listing recommendations. With direction from the Commission, staff will revise the Species Action Plans to address the change in listing status and conservation needs of these four species.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Commission approve not listing the harlequin darter, Homosassa shrew, osprey (Monroe county population), and Sherman's fox squirrel as State Threatened; removing these four species from the Species of Special Concern list; and directing staff to revise the Species Action Plans.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Brad Gruver, Section Leader, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation