

ESC America's Top 10

General Information	Please Use this Column to Provide the Requested Information
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Report Questions	
Do you have photos that can be used in the report?	yes
Will you want printed reports?	no
If your species is selected, will you use the opportunity to organize around the species and/or publicize its plight?	yes
The Species & Its Status Questions	
Common name, genus & species	El Segundo Blue Butterfly (<i>Euphilotes battoides allyni</i>)
Conservation Status	Endangered
Current population size	The butterfly declined from about 1,000 individuals in the late 1970s, when listed as an endangered species, to about 500 in 1984 before being saved by restoration efforts that steadily increased the population at the Airport Dunes to 123,000 as of 2011 (Center for Biological Diversity 2012).
Has the species been delisted? If yes, when? Was the recovery on time? (Skip questions 17+18.)	No
If no, does the species have a recovery plan?	Yes
If it does have a recovery plan, what is the projected downlisting and/or delisting date?	The butterfly does have a recovery plan, but there is no projected date.
Background Questions (for the report profile)	

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Geographic range	El Segundo blue butterfly is found only along the southeastern shores of Santa Monica Bay, California. The largest population lives on coastal dune habitat adjacent to Los Angeles International Airport, and smaller populations are found on the Chevron Refinery in El Segundo, at Malaga Cove in Torrance, and at two sites along the beach in Torrance and Redondo Beach (Weagley 2009).
Habitat	This butterfly only lives on coastal sand dunes with coast buckwheat which is the sole host plant for its larvae.
Primary diet (if applicable)	Adults gather nectar from coast buckwheat plants.

Public Engagement Questions (Please explain why the species is interesting, why it matters, why decision-makers + the public should care.)

Interesting facts about the species	Removing invasive vegetation and planting the butterfly's host plant allowed the El Segundo to recolonize two new areas. This was a surprise to scientists because the butterfly's were not known to be able to fly so far, but following restoration of new areas, they successfully dispersed into the restored habitat, giving great hope for their survival and recovery (Weagley 2009).
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Additional background information to complete the species profile in the report.

What are the most important messages that should be communicated about this success story?	The resurgence of the El Segundo blue butterfly is an inspiring story of the effectiveness of Endangered Species Act protection. Without ESA protection, all of the butterfly's coastal dune habitat would have been lost to development. ESA protection along with on the ground actions to restore the butterfly's host plant have allowed this beautiful butterfly's population to increase by more than 20,000 percent.
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Outline and describe the **existing threats** that might impede its recovery, e.g., new threats to its habitat, etc. Include any potential political threats, e.g., a Congressional delisting before its time. Cite any substantiating scientific studies.

Habitat destruction from development and non-native plants poses serious ongoing threats to the El Segundo blue. Coast buckwheat is outcompeted by plants that are not native to the coastal dunes ecosystem and habitat must be actively managed to save coast buckwheat and support butterflies.

Criteria-Specific Questions

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Detail the ecological and scientific importance of the species. Note if it is a keystone species. Describe its role in the biodiversity of its environment. Cite any substantiating scientific studies.

The El Segundo blue is completely dependent on its host plant, coastal buckwheat, for survival. Saving remnant patches and restoring coastal sand dunes with native vegetation will preserve not just the blue butterfly but also the other plants and animals that rely on healthy dune habitat for survival.

Provide information on any additional benefits the species provides, such as economic, medicinal, or ecosystem services.

The El Segundo blue butterfly is a lovely insect that represents a unique part of California's natural heritage.

Judge's score for importance of species.

What recovery actions have been taken for the species?

Habitat restoration has been pivotal to the resurgence of this butterfly. Replanting of coast buckwheat has allowed the population to rebound dramatically.

Why were those recovery actions successful?

On the ground replanting of the butterfly's host plant was key to the dramatic 22,000 percent increase in butterfly numbers since the time of listing as an endangered species (Center for Biological Diversity 2012).

If there are or have been multi-agency and/or public/private collaboration to protect the species, please describe.

Numerous groups have joined forces to restore the butterfly's habitat. Restoration has been conducted by residents, conservationists, government officials, and representatives from two nonprofit groups, The Urban Wildlands Group and the Los Angeles Conservation Corps Science, Education, and Adventure Lab program (Weagley 2009).

Please detail the species' recovery. What increases have there been in the size of the population and in the number of populations?

The butterfly declined from about 1,000 individuals in the late 1970s, when listed as an endangered species, to about 500 in 1984 before being saved by restoration efforts that steadily increased the population at the Airport Dunes to 123,000 in 2011. There are now five colonies in the metapopulation (FWS 1998, Center for Biological Diversity 2012).

If there is political support for the conservation of the species, please explain.

Many groups and agencies are working together to help save the butterfly (Weagley 2009, Los Angeles World Airports 2012).

Are there actions that need to be taken by government officials and/or NGOs to continue the recovery?

The coastal sand dune habitat where the butterfly lives must be continually restored to remove invasive vegetation and ensure the survival of the butterfly's host plant.

Are there additional actions that individuals can take to continue the species' recovery?

Individuals can support the groups that are working to save the butterfly.

Judge's score for recovery.

Final Judge's Score

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Please submit to Nancy Welch at nwelch@endangered.org by July 3, 2013. Thank you for participating in the 2013 Top Ten Report.

References

Center for Biological Diversity. 2012. On time, on target: how the Endangered Species Act is saving America's wildlife. Available at: http://www.esasuccess.org/report_2012.html (Accessed: August 13, 2013).

Los Angeles World Airports. 2012. LAX's 2011 El Segundo blue butterfly population count increases eight percent over previous year. Available at <http://www.lawa.org/newsContent.aspx?ID=1547> Accessed August 20, 2013.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998. El Segundo Blue (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) Recovery Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, OR.

Weagley, S. 2009. Two California butterflies wing toward recovery. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered News Bulletin. Available at: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/news/bulletin-spring2009/two-california-butterflies.html> Accessed August 20, 2013.