

New Mexico rare arthropod resource website launches to help conserve arthropod species

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The Sacramento Mountain Checkerspot Butterfly is the first New Mexican insect to be federally listed as endangered. This caterpillar was reared at the Albuquerque BioPark to aid in conservation efforts. Credit: New Mexico BioPark Society

The University of New Mexico's Museum of Southwestern Biology, Natural Heritage New Mexico, and the New Mexico BioPark Society have announced the launch of a new website, the New Mexico Rare

Arthropod Resource (NM-RARe).

This site, located at nmrare.org, is designed to educate and inform users about rare, endemic, and threatened [arthropod species](#) in New Mexico. The platform aims to compile information on these small, unique, and poorly known species so that land managers, conservationists, students and the public are better equipped to understand and protect them.

"NMRARe is the first of its kind for New Mexico in bringing to our attention the status not only of pollinators but a wide array of other arthropods in the state. It was made possible by dedicated group students, researchers, and [conservation](#) practitioners, and we hope that collaboration will grow to further the conservation of this important element of biodiversity in New Mexico," said Research Associate Professor Esteban Muldavin, director, Natural Heritage New Mexico, Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico.

Arthropods comprise the most species-rich group of animals on earth and include insects, arachnids (spiders and scorpions), crustaceans, and myriapods (millipedes and centipedes). Despite their small size, these diverse "bugs" serve hugely important roles in our terrestrial and [aquatic ecosystems](#) as predators, herbivores, decomposers, and pollinators, and many are at risk of extinction.

The NM-RARe website includes:

- **The List of Assessed Species:** Included on the site are New Mexico arthropods that are rare, endemic, or threatened. Threatened status is evaluated either by IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or NatureServe conservation assessments.
- **Species Accounts:** Detailed information on assessed species, including their distributions, life history, threats, and conservation considerations.

- Resources: Links to other sources of insect information, and opportunities to support improvement of the list.

A call to action

With the current alarming rates of global insect decline, the time to assess extinction threats is now. The NM-RARe logo was inspired by New Mexico's first federally endangered insect species, the Sacramento Mountain Checkerspot Butterfly, which has suffered such extreme declines as to be at immediate risk of going extinct. This species is sadly an example of what can happen when arthropods are left under-researched and overlooked for conservation considerations.

An intention for this site is to serve as a starting point for the collaborative development of a statewide arthropod conservation strategy that can be applied to protect New Mexico wildlife, and therefore our state's natural resources moving into the future.

"The dire situation of the Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot was a wake-up call for those of us concerned about insect conservation in New Mexico. To ensure that this does not happen to any more of the state's arthropods, we decided to develop a resource that explores the needs of the most vulnerable species, so that action to mitigate threats can be taken early," said Anna Walker, species survival specialist of Invertebrates at the New Mexico BioPark Society.

The NM-RARe project came together as an interdisciplinary collaboration of regional species experts and conservation professionals. The Museum of Southwestern Biology (MSB) based out of the University of New Mexico (UNM) is home to the Division of Arthropods, a center for taxonomic and ecological research on arthropods, and Natural Heritage New Mexico, an authority on the state's biodiversity status and natural resources.

Content for the NM-RARe was written largely by UNM Department of Biology students affiliated with the MSB. Species assessments were guided by expertise from the New Mexico BioPark Society, which on top of supporting the local ABQ BioPark, also operates as a regional center for species conservation efforts.

Provided by University of New Mexico

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