

Lawsuit filed to protect habitat for 14 Hawaii Island species

By [West Hawaii Today Staff](#) | Tuesday, October 29, 2019, 12:05 a.m.

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Phyllostegia floribunda (ho'awa) is seen. (photo courtesy Karl Magnacca Center for Biological Diversity/Special to West Hawaii Today)

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Drosophila digressa (picture-wing fly) photo courtesy Center for Biological Diversity

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Cyanea tritomantha ('aku) is seen. (photo courtesy Karl Magnacca Center for Biological Diversity/Special to West Hawaii Today)

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Phyllostegia floribunda (ho'awa) is seen. (photo courtesy Karl Magnacca Center for Biological Diversity/Special to West Hawaii Today)

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Drosophila digressa (picture-wing fly) photo courtesy Center for Biological Diversity

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KAILUA-KONA — The Center for Biological Diversity Monday sued the Trump administration's Secretary of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to protect and designate critical habitat for 14 endangered species found on Hawaii Island.

The rare wildlife includes 12 plants, one anchialine pool shrimp and one picture-wing fly. The center said the species are highly vulnerable to extinction because of their small population size and desperately need protected habitat. They are threatened by agriculture and urbanization, invasive species, nonnative ungulates, wildfire, erosion, natural disasters, sedimentation and climate change.

"These special species are found nowhere else besides Hawaii Island, so if they disappear from here they'll be lost forever," said Maxx Phillips, the center's Hawaii director. "Anchialine pool shrimp and the rest of this group needed habitat protection years ago, but they're not getting it from the anti-wildlife Trump administration."

The center is seeking an order declaring the service to in violation of the endangered species act and establishment of prompt deadlines for the service's issuance of proposed and final rules designating critical habitat for the species found on Hawaii Island.

The center said it filed the lawsuit Monday after the service did not respond to an Aug. 27 written notice informing the service that it was in violation of the Endangered Species Act.

The endangered species at issue are *Bidens hillebrandiana* ssp. *Hillebrandiana* (ko'oko'olau); *Bidens micrantha* ssp. *Ctenophylla* (ko'oko'olau); *Cyanea marksii* (haha); *Cyanea tritomantha* ('aku); *Cyrtandra nanawaleensis* (ha'iwale); *Cyrtandra wagneri* (ha'iwale); *Phyllostegia floribunda*; *Pittosporum hawaiiense* (ho'awa and ha'awa); *Platydesma remyi*; *Pritchardia lanigera* (lo'ulu); *Schiedea diffusa* ssp. *Macraei*; *Schiedea hawaiiensis*; *Stenogyne cranwelliae*; *Drosophila digressa* (picture-wing fly); *Vetericaris*

chaceorum (anchialine pool shrimp). It also recognized a taxonomic change for *Mezoneuron kawaiense* ('uhi 'uhi), which had been formerly listed as *Caesalpinia kawaiense*.

The lawsuit stems from the 2013 listing of 15 plant and animal species in Hawaii as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Endangered Species Act requires the service to designate critical habitat for any endangered species, yet so far the agency has only designated critical habitat for two of these species, the center said. The delay is depriving the plants and animals protection they're legally entitled, leaving them at increased risk of extinction.

To date *Bidens micrantha ssp. Ctenophylla* and *Mezoneuron kawaiense* (ko'oko'olau and haha) are the only two species with a designated critical habitat.

"Species with designated critical habitat are more than twice as likely to be in recovery as those without it," Maxx said. "To ensure these special plants and animals are around for generations to come, we must protect the places where they live."

Listing a species as endangered is the first step in ensuring its survival and recovery, the center said. Critical habitat protections would prohibit federal actions that would destroy or harm such habitat and help preserve what remains of these species' limited native range.

ADVERTISING

The Center for Biological Diversity is a nonprofit membership corporation with offices throughout the United States, including Hawaii. Via science, policy, and environmental law, the center says is actively involved in species and habitat protection issues throughout the United States and abroad.

The center stated in the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Honolulu, that the action on behalf of itself and its "adversely affected members."