

FACT SHEET

Protection Sought for Mauna Kea's Wēkiu Bug Endangered Species with Critical Habitat



KAHEA
THE HAWAIIAN-ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

BACKGROUND

- On May 22, 2003, KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance filed a petition with Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, to list the wēkiu bug (*Nysius wekiuicola*) as an endangered species with critical habitat under the federal Endangered Species Act.

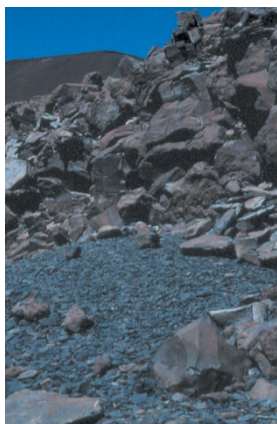


CURRENT STATUS

- The wēkiu bug was discovered in 1979.
- The wēkiu bug has been a candidate for listing since 1999.
- The size of the entire population of wēkiu bugs is unknown.
- Only 47 wēkiu bugs were trapped or observed during a study in 2002.
- The wēkiu bug is not protected from habitat destruction.

HABITAT

- The wēkiu bug is found only on the summit of Mauna Kea, Island of Hawai'i, above 11,000 feet. It lives in the spaces between cinders and other volcanic rock where it is protected from the elements and potential predators.



- The wēkiu bug also needs access to the edges of melting snow, where it feeds on insects and other organic matter blown up from lower elevations.

THREATS

- Loss and degradation of habitat by astronomy development and associated activities are the primary threat to the wēkiu bug. Compaction of cinders and other volcanic rocks is a significant threat because the wēkiu bug lives in the interstitial spaces between the rocks.
- Since the first summit road was paved, at least 62 acres of wēkiu bug habitat have been destroyed by astronomy development.
- Prime habitat for the bug already has been destroyed on Pu'u Wēkiu, Pu'u Hau'oki, and elsewhere.
- More than two-thirds of the bug's potential range is unprotected from future astronomy development.
- Human traffic related to telescopes, tourism, and recreation, and off-road vehicles also threaten the wēkiu bug.

- Introduced spiders compete with and may be preying on the wēkiu bug.
- Contamination of the summit area by chemical spills and wastewater poses an additional threat.

CRITICAL HABITAT

- Critical habitat are those areas that contain physical or biological features that are essential to the conservation of the species and that may require special management considerations or protection.
- Petitioned critical habitat for the wēkiu bug includes the summit area of Mauna Kea above 11,700 feet (the lowest reported occurrence of the wēkiu bug at this time), including all locations from which the wēkiu bug has been observed or reported, and any unoccupied habitat deemed necessary to recover the species.
- Federal agencies may not destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat.

PETITIONING PROCESS

- Upon receiving KAHEA's petition, the Secretary of the Interior has 90 days to determine whether the petition contains substantial information to consider listing the wēkiu bug with critical habitat designation.
- If such a determination is made, the Secretary must make a decision to list the wēkiu bug within 12 months of receiving the petition.
- If the Secretary proposes to list the wēkiu bug, a final listing decision must be made within 12 months of the proposed listing.

For more information on the wēkiu bug, go to www.kahea.org or call KAHEA at 808-524-8220