

Deseret Mountainsnail (*Oreohelix peripherica*)**Species Status Statement.**Distribution

Deseret mountainsnail occurs discontinuously in mountainous regions in Oregon, Idaho, and Utah. The currently understood distribution of this land snail in Utah consists of 13 localities in the northwestern part of the state (Henderson and Daniels 1916, 1917; Chamberlain and Jones 1929; Clarke 1993).

Table 1. Utah counties historically occupied by this species. There are no recent observations to verify the presence of this species in these counties.

Deseret Mountainsnail
BOX ELDER
CACHE
MORGAN
SUMMIT
WEBER

Abundance and Trends

Information is very limited in this regard. Since the original observations roughly a century ago, managers have only revisited a few of the 13 known Deseret mountainsnail colonies in Utah for evaluation or inventory (Oliver and Bosworth 1999). Historical accounts report that some colonies were quite abundant, comprising 10,000-100,000 individuals (Henderson and Daniels 1916, 1917; Clarke and Hovingh 1994; Clarke 1993).

Statement of Habitat Needs and Threats to the Species.Habitat Needs

Deseret mountainsnail is associated with intermountain woodlands (e.g., mixed-aspen, Gambel oak, mountain mahogany, mountain maple) from 4,700-6,000 feet in elevation (Clark and Hovingh 1994). Surveyors find individuals in open spaces of forested woodlands, and the species may congregate on boulders and in leaf debris. There may be some correlation between locality and directional aspect of mountain slopes, as Clarke and Hovingh (1994) mentioned multiple colonies being located on north to northeast facing slopes.

Threats to the Species

Deseret mountainsnail occurs in a handful of small areas throughout Utah; one known locality measures approximately 20 feet wide by 80 feet long. Habitat degradation due to development and catastrophic events (e.g., fire) are threats to such populations of mountainsnail (Clarke 1993; Clarke and Hovingh 1994). Terrestrial mollusks, especially mountainsnails (*Oreohelix* genus), are known to hibernate by burrowing beneath the surface of the soil (Jones 1935, 1940). Excavation occurring for new roads, or other purposes within their habitat, could likely result in some loss to the population. Additionally, forest fires could impact Deseret mountainsnail by burning vegetation cover or altering soil conditions where they burrow. Any type of habitat degradation or disaster could potentially extirpate individual colonies at a local level. The region of the state where this species occurs is also experiencing a surge of residential and commercial development.

Table 2. Summary of a Utah threat assessment and prioritization completed in 2014. This assessment applies to the species' entire distribution within Utah. For species that also occur elsewhere, this assessment applies only to the portion of their distribution within Utah. The full threat assessment provides more information including lower-ranked threats, crucial data gaps, methods, and definitions (UDWR 2015; Salafsky et al. 2008).

Deseret Mountainsnail
No Identified Threats - Data Gaps Only

Rationale for Designation.

The currently known range of Deseret mountainsnail is a handful of very small areas, which makes its population susceptible to catastrophic events and human activities. Historical observations of this species are also sorely outdated, leaving knowledge gaps in the species' life history, current abundance, and ecology, and therefore its management. Managers need to fill these gaps, and monitor potential threats. These activities will help prevent the possibility of Endangered Species Act listing of this species.

Economic Impacts of Sensitive Species Designation.

Sensitive species designation is intended to facilitate management of this species, which is required to prevent Endangered Species Act listing and lessen related economic impacts. An ESA listing of Deseret mountainsnail would have economic impacts for Utah, especially since there are no recent collections of this species. Designated Sensitive Species with no identified threats, only data gaps, will be researched until concerns are allayed, or specific threats are identified for management. In the absence of specific threats to manage, generic measures to protect mountain canyon habitats are recommended.

Literature Cited.

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