

Flies are given federal protection

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has extended federal protection to 12 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies under the Endangered Species Act.

Officials this week announced the ESA listing of 11 fly species, with one categorized as endangered.

The 12 Hawaiian picture-wing flies are found only on a single island, and each breeds only on a single or a few related species of plants, some of which are also listed as threatened or endangered species.

"More often than not large mammals such as bears, wolves and manatees receive most of the public's attention, while the importance of insects in our natural world is overlooked," said David Allen, director of the service's Pacific region. "Studies of Hawaiian picture-wing flies have revealed an incredible evolutionary history that allows people to understand the dynamic adaptive changes that Hawaiian species have undergone."

There are approximately 106 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies, officials said, with each adapted to a particular island and a specific habitat type, including deserts, rainforests and swamplands.

Hawaiian picture-wings flies have been called the "birds of paradise" of the insect world because of the elaborate markings on otherwise clear wings.

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