

30 YEARS OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

ROBBINS' CINQUEFOIL

The Robbins' cinquefoil, an alpine plant species of the rose family, is found only at two locations on the cold slopes of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The plant grows in some of the harshest conditions found anywhere in New England. Though the plant can withstand freezing temperatures and high winds, it required Endangered Species Act protections to escape extinction.

HISTORY OF ENDANGERMENT

In 1819, the Crawford Path was completed as a bridal path ascending Mount Washington in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In 1824, the Robbins' cinquefoil was discovered there. Approximately 95 percent of the cinquefoil's known habitat was found on just one acre of the mountain. Throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, the cinquefoil began to disappear from the trampling of horses and hikers and from commercial plant collectors.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

In 1980, the Robbins' cinquefoil was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The cinquefoil's known habitat was designated as critical habitat under the Act.

The Appalachian Mountain Club and the New England Wild Flower Society teamed up with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service to relocate the Crawford Path, educate the public, and reestablish healthy populations of the Robbins' cinquefoil. The Appalachian Mountain Club was involved in monitoring the plants, collecting seeds from the plants, and educating the public about how to avoid disturbing them.

In 1982, the New England Wild Flower Society instituted a reintroduction program. With collected seeds, they began growing the Robbins' cinquefoil at their Garden in the Woods in Framingham, Massachusetts. The plants are raised for

two to three years before mature plants are transplanted in the autumn.

Thanks to this cooperative recovery effort, the Robbins' cinquefoil population rebounded from 1,801 in 1973 to over 14,000 in two separate populations on Mount Washington and the Franconia Ridge in 2002. The plant was removed from the endangered species list in August 2002.



CONSERVATION TODAY

The Appalachian Mountain Club, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to monitor the Robbins' cinquefoil. The Robbins' cinquefoil is a success story of bringing an endangered species back from the brink of extinction through its Endangered Species Act listing, designation of critical habitat, development of a recovery plan, and implementation of the recovery plan with the cooperation of government agencies and concerned citizens.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Robbins' cinquefoil is an important component of the fragile alpine ecosystem of the Appalachian Mountains.

The species has aesthetic value for many people, and its recovery has provided scientific and educational value as we've come to have a greater understanding of the ecosystem.

OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

The Robbins' cinquefoil, though no larger than a quarter when in bloom, has fought the worst of nature's elements. With protections from the Endangered Species Act, the plant has also withstood human destruction of its environment.

The species has now recovered, but management will not immediately end. For five years, until 2007, plant managers will continue to supplement the re-established population and monitor its success to ensure that it does not fall into another downward spiral.



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