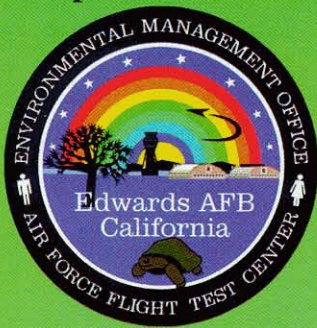


September 1997



Conservation
FACT SHEET

Natural Resources

Air Force Flight Test Center
Office of Public Affairs
AFFTC/PAE
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EDWARDS AFB ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Protecting resources, **NATURALLY**



If it wasn't for the desert's unique natural resources, Edwards Air Force Base may not even be here. Back in the 1930s, when the military sought a place to test experimental aircraft, no other area in the United States could compare to the remote natural runways offered by the dry lakebeds.

Because of the lakebeds and their importance to the Edwards mission, you might tend to overlook the diversity of plant, animal and bird communities that are also resources here. These communities make up several miniature habitats within the larger desert ecosystem.

Over the past 50 years, much has been discovered about how fragile and precious the desert really is. We now know there's much more to the natural resources at Edwards AFB.

Considering the starkness of the 301,000 acres of Edwards AFB, it's difficult to believe that more than 200 species of birds, more than 200 varieties of plants and 30 different kinds of mammals live here.

**The delicate beauty
of the desert is
especially evident
in the springtime**

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Common pests at Edwards AFB

A "pest" is an animal or plant which is not wanted. Whether they're ants, roaches, bees, fleas, mice, gophers, squirrels or dandelions, pests are annoying.

At Edwards, if you need help controlling invasion species such as squirrels, gophers or insects, contact the following offices: Housing residents call Family Housing Management, 277-4060. Commercial building residents call civil engineering, 277-2431. NASA call 258-3839.

At Edwards AFB, the pest management program strives to use methods that are as safe to humans and pets and as gentle to the environment as possible.

Birds on the flightline

Birds can be pests, too. Especially on the flightline, flocks of birds can be a hazard to pilots and aircraft while in flight. The Natural Resources Section participates in the Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (B.A.S.H.) program, which helps reduce this hazard through the training of personnel and research of Edwards' bird populations.

By studying the ecology and distribution of birds at Edwards, the Natural Resources Section can advise air operations how to reduce the chances for bird strikes.

As a responsible environmental steward, the Air Force considers the diversity of the ecosystems at all bases and has taken steps to manage these resources. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 32-7064, an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan was developed as guidance for bases to properly manage these natural resources while ensuring the Air Force's defense mission requirements are met. Natural Resources management and mission operations are interdependent on one another, not mutually exclusive.

The management of natural resources at Edwards AFB is overseen by the Natural Resources Section, which falls under the Conservation Pillar of Environmental Management.

Among the section's responsibilities are the conservation and management of sensitive species, fish and wildlife, manmade ponds and seasonal waters, and other activities. In addition, the section also continues to increase its knowledge base of those resources through research.

Sensitive species at Edwards

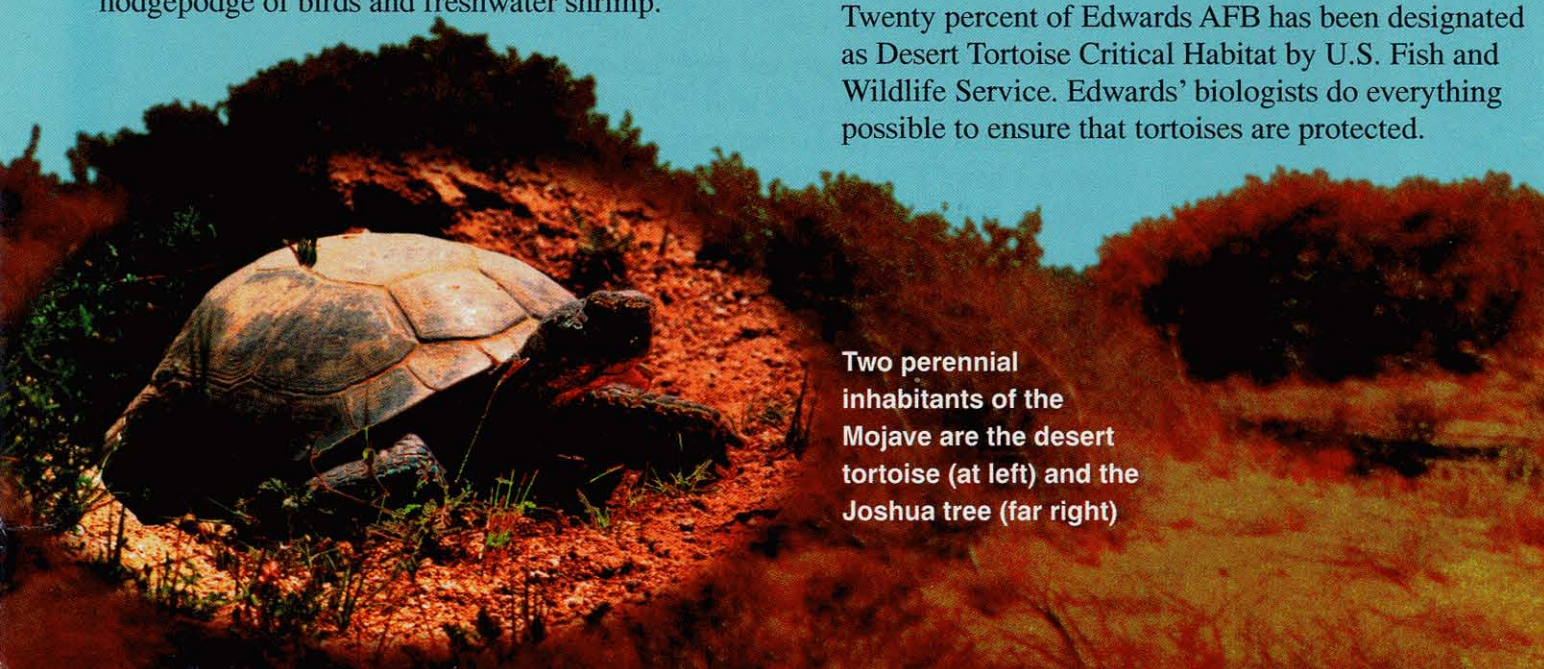
Edwards is one of approximately 40 Air Force installations that have federally-listed "threatened" or "endangered" species.

Because of its threatened status, the best-known animal species at Edwards is the desert tortoise. Edwards AFB participates actively in the conservation and recovery of listed species such as the tortoise.

The desert tortoise, also listed by the state of California as threatened, is native to the Mojave Desert, living on sandy flats and rocky hillsides. Twenty percent of Edwards AFB has been designated as Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Edwards' biologists do everything possible to ensure that tortoises are protected.

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The plants exist in five distinct communities: mesquite forests, Joshua Tree woodland, creosote brush scrub and two kinds of saltbush scrublands. These communities are also home to a variety of mammals, reptiles and birds. Nestled within the plant communities, several aquatic habitats can be found, including playa lakes, claypans and pools. At certain times of the year, these "watering holes" host a hodgepodge of birds and freshwater shrimp.



Two perennial inhabitants of the Mojave are the desert tortoise (at left) and the Joshua tree (far right)

