Status of the Fender’s Blue Butterfly

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SUMMARY

The rare Fender’s blue butterfly is found only in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Extensive surveys conducted from 1989 through 1992 uncovered 12 populations of the butterfly. Censuses at these sites accounted for 1700 adults in 1991 and 2600 adults in 1992. True overall abundance is probably 3000-5000 adults, based on an analysis of potential errors of estimation. Most Fender’s blue butterflies occurred in only five of the 12 sites; the remaining seven sites supported fewer than 200 adults.

Patterns of butterfly abundance strongly correlated with lupine populations, confirming the close association between the Fender’s blue butterfly and Kincaid’s lupine, its larval host plant.

Habitat destruction, natural succession of grasslands to forest, and weed invasion threaten all Fender’s blue butterfly populations. Legal protection, coupled with habitat restoration and control of pest plants, will be necessary to preserve this rare butterfly. Management programs should be supported by further studies of the biology of the Fender’s blue butterfly, Kincaid’s lupine, and their native grassland ecosystem.