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Contact: Scott Flaherty USFWS, 916-978-6156

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Endangered Species
Recovery Champion Awards in California**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Acting Director Rowan Gould today announced the 18 recipients of the Service's 2009 Recovery Champion award, including three in California. The Recovery Champion award recognizes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees and their partners for contributions to the recovery of threatened and endangered species in the United States.

"The Recovery Champion award both recognizes the exceptional conservation accomplishments of its honorees and highlights the importance of strong and diverse partnerships in species conservation," said Gould. "Recovery Champions are helping imperiled species regain their place in the natural resources fabric of our country while focusing attention on the importance of conserving our nation's biological heritage for future generations."

The California recipients are:

Dr. Richard Zembal with the **Orange County Water District** for his recovery work with the light-footed clapper rail. The "heart and soul" of initiatives to save this endangered species in its coastal wetlands, Dr. Richard Zembal has brought together a range of partners—including the U. S. Navy, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Unified Port of San Diego. Founder of the Light-footed Clapper Rail Study and Management Team, Dr. Zembal has engaged two major zoological institutions—the San Diego Zoo and SeaWorld Adventure Park—to help maintain the health, demographic variability, and genetic endowment of the species.

Along with breeding more than 250 of the birds in captivity and releasing them into the wild, Dr. Zembal's team has conducted wetland-by-wetland monitoring that has guided habitat restoration, predator management, and population enhancement by managers who implement conservation actions based on the high-quality data that his team has developed. The number of light-footed clapper rails has steadily increased from 163 pairs range wide in 1989 to a record of 443 pairs in 2007, a tribute to his leadership.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees **Chris Nagano** and **David Kelly** from the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office for their work to recover the Lange's metalmark butterfly.

Nagano and Kelly have worked with the Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge to bring back the Lange's metalmark butterfly from extinction. They worked to organize funding

and acquire expertise to establish a propagation program, a grazing program and an aggressive habitat improvement program. They supported refuge staff by assisting with surveys, providing information, and aiding in the development of a Safe Harbor Agreement with the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. With their hard work and dedication the Lange's metalmark butterfly is on the rebound. Extinction was certain without immediate and aggressive measures.

For a list of the all 18 recovery champions, please visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Champion website at:

<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/recovery/champions/index.html>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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