

## How a rare plant found only near Lake Shasta finally got protection to help save it

By: *Damon Arthur*

Redding Record Searchlight

February 9, 2023



Shasta snow-wreath has unusual flowers. The white tufts are made mostly of stamens rather than petals. The flowers are on the plant for only a week or so.  
*Courtesy of Ken DeCamp*

A rare plant found only in Shasta County and discovered by scientists just 30 years ago is headed for protection under California's Endangered Species Act.

The California Fish and Game Commission on Wednesday approved listing the Shasta snow wreath as "threatened" under the state's Endangered Species Act.

The plant was first found by scientists in 1992, and most of the areas where it is located are near Lake Shasta, according to reports written for the commission.

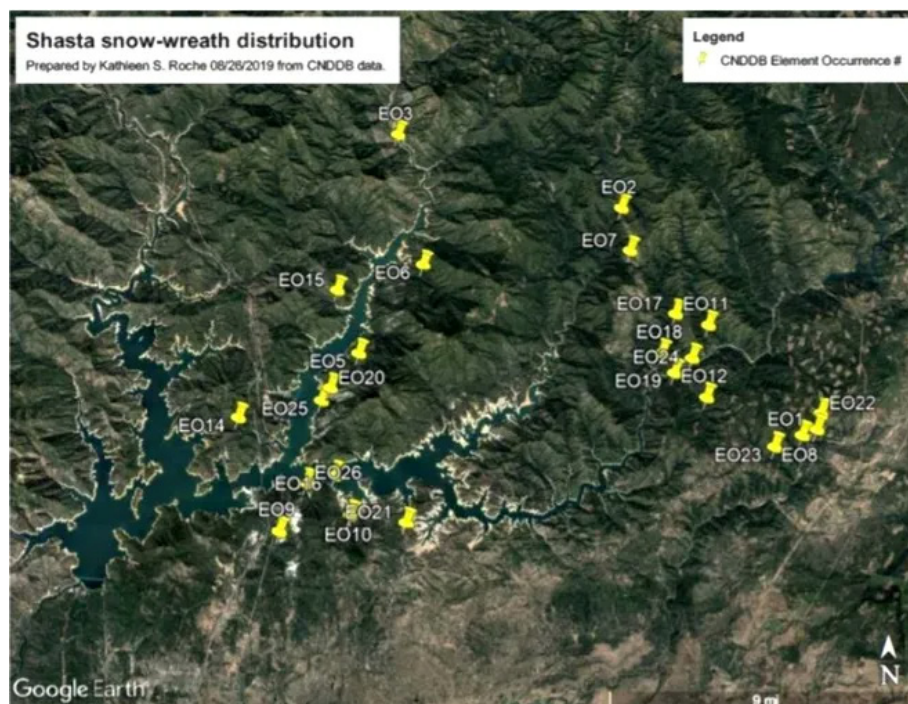
The origins of the plant date back some 56 to 34 million years ago, but it likely remained undiscovered because of its short blooming period, according to the petition requesting the plant be added to the endangered species list. That petition was sent to the commission in 2019 by Kathleen Roche.

The plant produces a “whiskery” white flower ball for only about a week to 10 days in late April or early May, the petition says.

A California Department of Fish and Wildlife report says the plant is only found in 24 separate locations in western Shasta County.

State officials said the proposal to raise the height of Shasta Dam 18.5 feet could possibly inundate places where the plants grow. Other development associated with the dam expansion also could harm the plant.

The fish and wildlife report says that 19 of 24 "occurrences" of the snow wreath would be affected by raising the height of the dam.



This map, included in a California Department of Fish and Wildlife report on the Shasta snow-wreath, shows where the plant grows around Lake Shasta. *California Department of Fish and Wildlife*

The plant has been under a protected status by the state since the commission voted in April 2020 to declare the snow wreath a candidate for listing under the state's Endangered Species Act. Wednesday's vote ratifies the earlier commission action and lists the plant as threatened, said David Thesell, a regulation program manager for the commission.

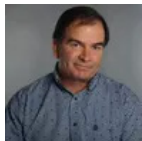
The proposal to raise the height of the dam has gone dormant for the time being, but over the past decade the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has spent millions of dollars investigating the feasibility and assessing the environmental impacts of raising the dam height.

Citing information in the petition, the state's report says other activities around Lake Shasta also potentially threaten the snow-wreath, including recreation, logging, mining and other development.

Even control burns and hand-thinning to reduce fire danger pose a threat to the plant, the report says.

The state lists on its website 95 plants as either threatened or endangered, with "endangered" the more imperiled status, Thesell said.

Killing or possessing plants that are listed as threatened is prohibited, according to the fish and wildlife.



*[Damon Arthur](#), Reporter*

I cover mostly outdoors stuff like resources, environment, recreation and rural issues.

©2023 www.redding.com All rights reserved.

<https://www.redding.com/story/news/local/2023/02/09/shasta-snow-wreath-found-near-lake-shasta-on-ca-endangered-species-list/69885143007/>