

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Scott's Riffle Beetle



Photo: Kyle Gerstner

A REMOTE LITTLE BEETLE

The Scott's Riffle Beetle occurs in one place on earth: Big Springs at Lake Scott State Park in western Kansas. Its occurrence in this lovely state park is good news for the beetle, but park managers cannot control the future of the Ogallala Aquifer, this remote and rare insect's lifeline. Kansas designated the Scott's Riffle Beetle as a state-threatened species in 1978, but upgraded it to endangered in 1999. The state recovery plan recognizes that it cannot manage threats such as aquifer depletion. Without federal protection, the Scott's Riffle Beetle may be lost forever.

PROTECTING THE OGALLALA AQUIFER

The main threat to the Scott's Riffle Beetle is depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer due to groundwater pumping, primarily for crop agriculture. Protection for this riffle beetle would involve better planning and regulation of groundwater use in order to ensure adequate water supplies for the ecosystems this aquifer makes possible. Implications of aquifer depletion are enormous, given that the Ogallala extends under the surface of eight western and midwestern states.

KNOW YOUR BEETLE

- **The Sensitive Type:** In addition to changes in water level, this riffle beetle also needs to be protected from contamination of the aquifer and Big Springs by pesticides or other chemicals.
- **Living up to its Name:** The Scott's Riffle Beetle is adapted for feeding along the swift, cobble-laden stream where it lives. Long legs and well-developed claws enable it to maintain its grip. Both adults and larvae can swim upstream against swift currents.
- **Slipping through the Cracks:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service placed this species on the Endangered Species Act candidate list in 1989 but dropped it in 1996.

CLIMATE CHAOS

Extended droughts resulting from climate change further pressure the Ogallala Aquifer on which the Scott's Riffle Beetle depends.

