

## Defenders of Wildlife Is Supporting Bobcat Project

With a grant from Defenders of Wildlife's Earth Friends Wild Species Fund, nearly 80 Citizen Scientist volunteers are working with ENSP biologists to help protect the habitat of New Jersey's endangered bobcats.

Throughout the year, trained volunteers will check several hundred scent stations designed to gauge the presence of bobcats. To lure bobcats, the stations feature bobcat urine and a visual attractant – a piece of aluminum hanging from a string three to four feet above the ground. Each site also has motion-sensitive, infrared cameras to take pictures of any bobcats that do appear. The volunteers will periodically change camera film and refresh the bobcat urine.

The data gathered will help state biologists develop a long-term survival strategy for the bobcat.

"New Jersey's Bobcat Project offers regular citizens an opportunity to gain hands-on experience and first-hand knowledge about bobcat ecology and biology," said Nina

Fascione, vice president of Field Conservation Programs for Defenders of Wildlife, a national non-profit wildlife advocacy organization.

The financial support and new volunteers also have enabled ENSP to increase its number of cage traps. "We're hoping to get a better idea of the distribution of bobcats throughout northern New Jersey," said Mick Valent, ENSP's principal zoologist. Biologists also want to test the habitat model they created using information from ENSP's database, which identifies seven types of woodland habitat important to bobcats.

"Ultimately, we will get a better idea about the habitat they are using and their protection needs," Valent said.

## Be the First To Know: Fish & Wildlife E-Mail Lists

Would you like to be among the first to know about matters related to endangered species and other wildlife issues? The DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife offers eight e-mail lists that notify subscribers of important wildlife news and events.

Take advantage of this news service and get on the list by visiting [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com). Click on the E-Mail Lists button.



Volunteers inspecting a bobcat cage trap during their training.

### Drive Conservation Home

Your purchase of the attractive \$50 Conserve Wildlife license plate lets everyone know you believe in conservation -- and 80% of your payment goes directly toward preserving wildlife and its habitat.



So drive conservation home to let everyone know you care about New Jersey's wildlife!

Poster now displayed in all state Motor Vehicle Inspection Facilities and Volvo showrooms.

## Drive Conservation Home

### Campaign Encourages Wildlife License Plate Sales

In an effort to promote the sale of Conserve Wildlife license plates, Parsons and Volvo Cars of N.A. is displaying "Drive Conservation Home" license plate posters in all statewide Motor Vehicle Inspection Facilities operated by Parsons and in Volvo showrooms throughout New Jersey.

"We're very glad to be working with Parsons and Volvo to help emphasize the importance of Conserve Wildlife license plate sales because four out of every five dollars contributed goes directly to help preserve New Jersey's native species," said Larry Niles, ENSP chief. "We also want to encourage drivers who have the Conserve Wildlife plates to get them for their other cars, too. It will really make a difference in our conservation work."

MKM Group LLC/0 to 60, an advertising and public relations firm, has donated its services to create a promotional campaign, which will include radio and television public-service announcements. Conserve Wildlife license plate sales have declined during the past five years, largely because of increased competition from other organizations. The ENSP depends on this revenue to fund its budget and conduct its important conservation work for endangered and threatened species.

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## Conserve Wildlife Foundation News

Message from Linda Tesauro, Executive Director

### What Will Be Your Legacy?

First of all, thank you. Whether you purchased a Conserve Wildlife license plate or you're one of our loyal members, your valuable contributions are helping to preserve New Jersey's wildlife and its habitat. But did you know that you could do even more?

Because you care about our environment and want to stay connected to all living things, you might want to consider a gift to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ in your estate plans.

Planning a gift from your estate is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in New Jersey's future. Depending on how your gift is structured and whether you give it now or as a bequest, planned giving can offer a variety of excellent benefits, including charitable deductions, a reduction in capital gains, gift or estate taxes and the retention of principal for your heirs. Of course, the best benefit is the satisfaction of knowing your gift will help our rare and fragile wildlife. A new endowment has just been established to help the Conserve Wildlife Foundation grow in the future. Please call me or talk with your attorney or financial advisor to learn more about a legacy for wildlife protection.

### Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

Once again, we extend our appreciation to the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for its continued support of our Citizen Scientist program. Through their surveys and diligent stewardship, our Citizen Scientist volunteers continue to serve as the foundation of ENSP's important work. The Dodge Foundation's grant helps support this initiative, and we are deeply grateful.

### Kudos to Partners in Protection

Our sincerest thanks to the following Partners in Protection who contributed \$250 or more during 2004 to protect our rare wildlife:

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# Wildlife

Spring 2005  
[www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com)

## Red Knot Numbers Tumble To Historic Low in South America

The historically low numbers of red knots recorded on the Delaware Bay last spring were repeated this year on the birds' wintering grounds at the southern tip of South America.

"What we have now is the smallest number of red knots ever recorded in their wintering area," said Larry Niles, chief of the Department of Environmental Protection's Endangered and Nongame Species Program. For the sixth consecutive year, Niles led an international team of biologists to Chile's Tierra del Fuego in February to assess the birds on their wintering grounds.

The results, which mirror an aerial survey in late January, showed the number of wintering red knots overall had plummeted from nearly 31,000 to fewer than 18,000, and from 26,000 to only 9,800 at Bahia Lomas, the knots' principal wintering ground.

For eons, as part of their annual 20,000-mile round-trip journey, the red knots and other shorebirds have stopped in May on Delaware Bay to refuel on horseshoe crab eggs en route to their June Arctic breeding grounds. But since the early 1990s, a dramatic increase in the harvest of horseshoe crabs for use as bait has resulted in a 90-percent decline in the availability of horseshoe crab eggs.

Last year on Delaware Bay, the peak count of red knots fell to a record low of 13,325. Still, researchers considered the possibility that the shortage of horseshoe crab eggs had prompted a significant number of red knots to stop for food elsewhere in the United States – even though no noteworthy stopovers were reported and no known food alternatives can match the energy-rich eggs.

But it now appears that last year's record low of red knots on the Delaware Bay accurately reflected the species' status. "For eight years we've seen a declining number of red knots on the Delaware Bay, but those declines weren't completely reflected in the numbers on Tierra del Fuego during the winter," Niles said. "The fact that the numbers in Tierra del Fuego now approximate the red-knot count on the bay is an indication of a real decline caused, most likely, by the ongoing scarcity of horseshoe crab eggs on the Delaware Bay."

The ENSP and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently are reassessing the red knot's status, which eventually could lead to the state-threatened bird being granted federal candidate status.

Although such status carries no regulatory weight, it could free up federal funds to protect red knots. Meanwhile, New Jersey Audubon Society and a suite of other conservation organizations are considering filing a lawsuit to force a federal listing of the red knot as a threatened or endangered species.

The DEP now forbids the harvest of horseshoe crabs until June 7 when the red knots leave. Based on what occurs this May, that restriction could become more stringent. Meanwhile, the DEP plans to enhance enforcement and further reduce human disturbance on the birds' main feeding beaches.



A banded red knot.

Photo courtesy of Brad Winn.

### Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Learn more about New Jersey's efforts to protect rare wildlife in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. See page 2.

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ENDANGERED AND NONGAME SPECIES PROGRAM MISSION  
"To actively conserve New Jersey's biological diversity by maintaining and enhancing endangered and nongame wildlife populations within healthy functioning ecosystems."



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## Blueprint for Success: New Jersey's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

A message from Martin McHugh,  
Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife



Since early last year, Fish & Wildlife staff have been working on a blueprint for the protection and management of New Jersey's wildlife species in greatest need of conservation. The blueprint is called a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, and every state must have one approved by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service by October 2005 to qualify for federal funds through the State Wildlife Grant program.

New Jersey currently receives \$1.1 million a year in State Wildlife Grant funding to conserve wildlife species that are endangered, threatened or rare, or have special conservation needs. Through contributions to the state income tax check-off for wildlife and purchases of the Conserve Wildlife license plate, New Jersey residents provide the 25 percent match that enables our state to obtain these critical federal funds. In fact, for every dollar residents donate, the federal government contributes three dollars in funding to protect our wildlife. This revenue supports the work of our Endangered and Nongame Species Program, which currently receives no dedicated state funding.

A draft of New Jersey's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy will be submitted to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service this spring. An array of partners, including other government agencies, conservation groups, private landowners and other members of the public, helped develop the draft strategy. It lays the foundation for better coordination of wildlife research and management among programs within the Division of Fish and Wildlife, state and federal agencies and many partners in the conservation community.

The conservation strategies from states throughout the nation collectively will offer a strong argument to Congress to consider providing a stable and permanent funding source for rare-species conservation. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife's Teaming with Wildlife Committee is leading the push for permanent funding. As the committee's chairman, I have an opportunity to showcase New Jersey's strategy, which can play a major role in efforts to obtain permanent federal funding for rare-species conservation.

New Jersey faces an unprecedented wildlife-conservation challenge to address habitat disturbances and destruction caused by widespread development, people, recreational vehicles, contaminants, invasive species and overabundant deer. Fortunately, we have worked diligently during the past 30 years to identify critical fish and wildlife species and habitats and to develop effective strategies to restore and conserve these precious natural resources.

Our Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy ties together all of our wildlife data and management strategies so we can provide a brighter future for New Jersey's rare species and important habitats. It also offers New Jersey residents many opportunities to play a role in wildlife conservation either by volunteering to help our biologists on research and management projects, for example, or by supporting conservation actions and organizations that are central to the strategy's success. We invite everyone to view the draft plan at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) and become involved in conserving New Jersey's wildlife in any way that you can.

## Oil Spill's Long-Term Effects Undetermined

When the ruptured Athos I oil tanker spewed more than a quarter-million gallons of crude oil into Delaware River last Nov. 26 Fish and Wildlife professionals and a cadre of dedicated Citizen Scientist volunteers played key roles in the Department of Environmental Protection's response.

ENSP Chief Larry Niles accompanied state conservation officers to determine where booms should be placed to block the flow of oil into highly productive freshwater tidal marshes. Two dozen Citizen Scientists surveyed affected waterways daily to find oiled birds.

Some 451 wild birds, primarily Canada geese, mallards, black ducks and ring-billed gulls, were captured and taken to Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research Inc. in Newark, Del. Hundreds more oiled birds were not impaired enough to be captured.

Crude oil is much thicker than other types of oil and more difficult to remove from wildlife. "It was nasty, tarry stuff that was so gooey the birds' wings were stuck to their sides," said Dr. Erica Miller, a Tri-State veterinarian. Some Canada geese weighed more than 11 pounds when they were brought in, but tipped the scales at just under eight pounds after the oil was removed. By the end of February, Tri-State had cleaned and released 392 birds – nearly 87 percent of those captured.

ENSP biologists and volunteers also kept a close eye on six bald eagles – apparently five adult year-round nesting birds and one migrant – that were stained with spots of oil. The birds evidently removed the oil by preening.

Still unknown, however, is the oil's effect on the endangered shortnose sturgeon population, which inhabits an area of the river near the spill site.

Meanwhile, a crew of 600 continues clean-up operations along the Delaware. A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration model projected that most of the remaining oil would bind into tar balls and eventually flow into the ocean. "We think that's already occurred, because we haven't seen a lot of tar balls come up on Delaware Bay beaches," said Bob VanFossen, DEP's assistant director of emergency response and planning.

If tar balls do appear on beaches, particularly those where migrating shorebirds feed during the spring, DEP crews are prepared to remove them.

## Efforts Under Way To Shore Up Declining Kestrels

The American kestrel, the smallest and most colorful falcon in North America, appears to be in serious trouble in New Jersey.

The ENSP's surveys last year found very few kestrels either in historic habitat – places in which they have been seen during the past decade – or in the kind of open, pasture-like area considered highly suitable for the birds.

During three-minute stops at nearly 1,100 survey points, ENSP researchers observed kestrels at only eight of the sites. In a follow-up survey, researchers visited 77 survey points for 10 minutes each, but saw kestrels at just six sites.

"We're pretty sure we are observing a real decline," said Amanda Dey, senior biologist. "It's a combination of a reduction in habitat quality, habitat quantity and suitable nesting sites."

Kestrels feed on insects, small rodents, reptiles, amphibians and, occasionally, on small birds. They hunt most frequently in areas with short grass or sparse ground cover and high perch sites, including pastures, roadside berms, mown hayfields, open orchards and park lawns. The loss of farmland to development has had a major impact. Fewer snag trees (dead, but still standing) also have adversely affected the birds since they typically use abandoned nest cavities drilled in those trees by woodpeckers.

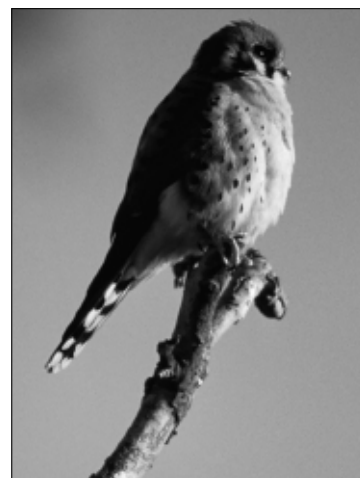
Currently, kestrels are listed as a species of special concern in New Jersey. The ENSP is developing conservation strategies and management plans to address the bird's apparent decline. These include:

- Fine-tuning a Geographic Information Systems habitat model, used last year to help locate the survey sites, to identify the most suitable habitat for kestrels.
- Conducting more surveys this spring to gather data on the kestrel population statewide.
- Developing a nest box program, which will involve volunteers placing and monitoring nest boxes to determine if the kestrels use them and fledge offspring.

One of the primary targets of the nest box program, which will begin this year in central New Jersey, is preserved farmland. Through the Department of Environmental Protection's Landowner Incentive Program, farmers will be encouraged to place and monitor kestrel nest boxes. The effort would supplement other incentive-program initiatives that focus on grassland birds.

### Help the Kestrels

To pay for kestrel nest boxes and biologists, funds are urgently needed to support the ENSP's three-year, \$45,000 kestrel restoration project. If you would like to support kestrel comeback efforts, send your check to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation and write "For Kestrel Conservation" on the accompanying envelope



An American kestrel.

Photo courtesy of Marc Vidal.

## Watchable Wildlife

Late spring and summer are fine times to enjoy New Jersey wildlife. Watchable wildlife sites listed in the *New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide* include:

### PYRAMID MOUNTAIN NATURAL HISTORICAL AREA

Within sight of the New York City skyline, the mountain's trails meander through diverse habitats. Ridge-top chestnut oaks and beech trees provide cover for year-round residents such as pileated woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, wild turkeys and black-capped chickadees. Summer neotropical visitors include scarlet tanagers, yellow warblers and indigo buntings. Black bears, beavers, white-tailed deer, coyotes and bobcats are also present.

**Directions:** Take County Route 511, Boonton Avenue, north from Main Street in Boonton for 3.3 miles to the visitor center on the left.

**Information:** Morris County Park Commission, (973) 334-3130.

### STAFFORD FORGE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Four ponds, a small freshwater marsh and hundreds of acres of pine-oak forest attract nesting, migrating and wintering wildlife to this Pinelands jewel. An added bonus: A pygmy pine forest of 4-foot to 6-foot pitch pines, blackjack and scrub oaks covers the northern end of Stafford Forge. A cycle of burnings and clear cutting every 25 years to 50 years until the early 1900s has resulted in a unique assortment of plants and animals, including curly grass fern, broom crowberry, Eastern timber rattlesnakes and Pine Barrens tree frogs. Beaver, hognose snakes, southern leopard frogs and Northern water snakes can also be seen.

**Directions:** From Garden State Parkway exit 58, take County Route 539 north for 0.2 miles. Turn right at mile marker four, go 1.6 miles to Stafford Forge entrance straight ahead. For the viewing platform in the pygmy pine forest, stay on Route 539 north toward Warren Grove for two more miles. Platform and trail are on the right.

**Information:** DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife, (609) 259-2132.

To order your copy of the *New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide*, send a \$14.90 check (\$10.95 plus \$3.95 for shipping and handling) payable to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400, Att: N.J. Wildlife Viewing Guide.

## Herp Atlas Surveyors Needed

Volunteers are needed to participate in the ENSP's ongoing Herp Atlas project, a quantitative survey of all the reptiles and amphibians (herptiles) in New Jersey. ENSP trains volunteers to gather information, which will be added to the critical habitat-mapping database for New Jersey's Landscape Project.

To find out how you can become a Citizen Scientist volunteer, please contact Larissa Smith at (609) 628-2103 or [llsmith@gtc3.com](mailto:llsmith@gtc3.com).

### Correction

The photograph of a bird, which appeared on page 2 in the winter edition of *Conserve Wildlife*, was misidentified. It is a Kentucky warbler, one of the species adversely affected by excessive deer browsing.



## June

### First week:

- Shorebirds leave quickly for Arctic breeding grounds.
- Songbirds fledging.
- Black skimmers nesting.
- Peak of heron/egret nesting.

### Second week:

- Northern pine snakes laying eggs.

### Third week:

- Piping plovers fledging.
- Territorial songbird singing begins to quiet down.
- Peregrine falcons fledging.

## July

### First week:

- Bald eagles fledging.
- Herons and egrets fledging.

### Second week:

- Ospreys fledging.
- Least terns and black skimmers fledging.

### Third week:

- Adult shorebirds migrating south through New Jersey's coastal areas.

## August

### First week:

- Ospreys fledging.
- Red knots en route from the Arctic to South America begin migrating through New Jersey's coastal areas.

### Second week:

- Last of piping plover chicks fledge.

### Third week:

- Passerine migration beginning through Cape May peninsula.

### Fourth week:

- Eagle fledglings moving away from nests.
- Last of least terns fledge.
- Plovers preparing to migrate south to Florida and the Gulf Coast.
- Bats returning to their wintering caves and mines.

## September

### First week:

- Ospreys begin migrating to northern South America.

- Raptor migration begins through Cape May peninsula.

### Second week:

- Monarch butterflies begin migration.
- Diamondback terrapin eggs begin hatching.

### Third week:

- Peak of bats returning to their wintering caves/mines.

### Fourth week:

- Raptor migration peaks on Cape May peninsula.