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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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Wildlife Protection Begins Locally

Message From Larry Niles, ENSP Chief

Elmer and Bunny Klegg and Red and Mary Jane Horner are eagle fanatics. Even after 25 years on the job, I can't help but be infected by their enthusiasm. From the Chesapeake Bay to Alaska, they've traveled throughout North America to witness world-renowned concentrations of eagles. But they're also dedicated to New Jersey's eagles. As volunteers for the ENSP, they watch over eagle pairs in Salem and Gloucester counties as if they were their own kids.

Their work, and the work of many other volunteers busily collecting wildlife data for a number of projects, underscores a fundamental change now occurring in the protection of wildlife. From projects as varied as protecting piping plovers, hawks and songbirds to mapping critical habitats for a host of species, we have learned that the ENSP is a small group with a big job. That job can only be accomplished with the help of people living in NJ communities.

Our volunteers are now involved in nearly every one of our field projects. We are training citizen scientists in the skills of wildlife protection and monitoring, and creating an infrastructure that allows communities to utilize the resulting data and mapping to help guide important planning decisions. With new grants from the Educational Foundation of America and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, this unique, nationally recognized effort will be expanded with more volunteers and more wildlife-related projects.

With our training, any citizen can -- like the Kleggs and Horners -- make a real difference in NJ's environment.

CARA: 2000 a good start

Last year's congressional effort to permanently fund state-based wildlife conservation and wildlife-related education and recreation fell short of its objective.

Nonetheless, Congress did authorize a one-year package of \$100 million in new state wildlife grants. That's a good start, according to the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition that is continuing to back the passage of CARA (Conservation and Reinvestment Act). That far more expansive proposal would stabilize and annually increase ENSP and other Division of Fish and Wildlife and DEP funding by millions of dollars each year. It would do so by utilizing federal off-shore oil and gas revenues to permanently fund nearly \$3 billion a year in wildlife-related projects nationwide.

Naomi Edelson, director of Teaming with Wildlife, thanks everyone in New Jersey who supported CARA. As a result of that support, New Jersey's entire congressional delegation supported CARA. She asks that you again contact your local congressman and two U.S. senators, Robert Torricelli and Jon Corzine, to urge their support this year for CARA. In addition to their local offices, they can be reached by dialing 202-224-3121.

For more information, click on www.teaming.com, Teaming with Wildlife's website.

SPECIES REPORT CARD:

Here's how some of the species ENSP monitors and manages fared in 2000



BALD EAGLES: Twenty-five active pairs fledged 30 young, both modern records.

PIPING PLOVERS: These beach-nesters increased their breeding pairs by 5, to 112, and produced an estimated 1.4 fledglings per nest, the highest productivity ENSP has recorded since it began observations in 1987.

BOG TURTLES: More sites were discovered for this federally and state-protected turtle.

BUCK MOTHS: After two down drought-stricken years, this wetland moth's numbers increased dramatically thanks to increased rainfall.

OSPREY: Nest success relatively good, but somewhat reduced along southern Atlantic coast. ENSP studying whether birds are being affected by the reduced availability of fish prey or nest disturbances.

PEREGRINE FALCONS: An average year with 17 active pairs -- 11 on salt marsh towers and urban buildings, six on bridges -- fledging 23 young. Concerns remain regarding possible effect of contaminants and problems associated with nests on bridges.

SHOREBIRDS: Peak count of 243,840 birds along Delaware Bay was average for the past three years, but high horseshoe crab harvests throughout the Mid-Atlantic are a continued threat. Last spring some birds had trouble gaining optimum takeoff weight.

BLACK SKIMMERS: Number of colonies remained the same, but number of nesting pairs dropped 7 percent, to 2,410.

BOBCATS: Unclear whether increased sightings represent a true increase in population numbers.



TIMBER RATTLESNAKES: Under increasing pressure from development, only secure sites on federal property.

LEAST TERNS: Number of nesting pairs dropped from 1,964 to 1,571 -- which, however, is still within recent ranges.

WOODLAND RAPTORS, NEOTROPICAL MIGRANTS: Contiguous forest upon which they depend continues to be further fragmented.



Woodrats Thriving At N.J. Palisades

For the second consecutive year, the trapping of Allegheny woodrats amidst the rock talus at the base of the N.J. Palisades has yielded good results.

During two nights in October, ENSP biologists captured and released 24 individuals -- the same record number as the 1999 trapping effort yielded.

"The population is certainly stable," says Mike Valent, senior ENSP zoologist. "Also, we didn't see a lot of raccoon droppings in the area where the woodrats are found."

That's an important finding. Raccoon roundworm is a parasite that fatally attacks the central nervous system of the woodrats, which formerly were known as eastern woodrats. The woodrats pick up the parasite's eggs when they collect the seeds often found in raccoon droppings. Raccoon roundworm may be the principal reason that the woodrats, which are considered endangered in New Jersey, have disappeared from much of their range in the northeastern U.S.

Once found in New York's Catskill Mountains, the woodrats' northernmost population is now the N.J. Palisades, which is also New Jersey's lone known population now. In addition to capturing the woodrats, ENSP biologists and Kathleen LoGuidice, a post-doctoral biologist with the Center for Ecosystem Studies in New York, also collected the few raccoon droppings they found for analysis. If the droppings test positive for roundworm eggs, the ENSP is considering using treated baits to treat the local raccoons with a drug that will kill the roundworm in their systems.

Wanted: Nesting colonial waterbird info

To make its colonial waterbird survey more comprehensive, the ENSP wants to know about any strong evidence this year of nesting herons, egrets, gulls, terns or skimmers north of Point Pleasant or in the Delaware Bay area. For a reporting form, e-mail Dave Jenkins at djenkins@dep.state.nj.us

As Winter Turns To Spring Keep Your Eyes On Wildlife

If you're interested in a great wildlife viewing opportunity in the late winter and spring, check out this Watchable Wildlife hot spot:

Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission Environment Center

Part of Richard W. DeKorte Park, this center's outer trails, particularly the Transco Trail, provide good views of wintering raptors, including Northern harriers, rough-legged hawks, American kestrels and occasional peregrine falcons. To view wintering waterfowl, including between 500 to 800 canvasbacks, ruddy ducks, all three merganser species, Northern shovelers and occasional common goldeneyes and bald eagles -- take the Marsh Discovery Trail through the Kingsland tidal impoundment. Spring brings such species as warblers -- including pine, palm and yellow-rumped -- phoebes, golden and ruby-crowned kinglets, hermit thrushes, American goldfinches, tree swallows and, late in April, shorebirds such as greater yellowlegs.

Directions: From the New Jersey Turnpike, exit 16W, take NJ 3 west to NJ 17 south (Lyndhurst exit). Follow the ramp onto Polito Avenue and continue to the end. At the stop sign, turn left onto Valley Brook Avenue and continue 1.5 miles to its end. Continue straight across the railroad tracks to the environment center on the left.

Information: Call the environment center at 201 460-8300.



Help Choose the Division's New Logo

In 1999, legislation changed the name of the N.J. Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife to the N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife. The name change was long overdue considering the division's comprehensive conservation efforts for both game and nongame species over the last 30 years. Along with the name change, the division is considering a more progressive logo that is more representative of its comprehensive wildlife conservation programs. Your opinion is being sought on the proposal. Visit the Divisions website at www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw to register your vote on the new logo proposal.



February

- Third week:**
■ Eastern tiger salamanders lay eggs in vernal ponds
Last week:
■ Bald eagles begin laying eggs

March

- First week:**
■ Peepers (small treefrogs) and wood frogs begin calling (could be earlier or later, depending on weather)
Third week:
■ Piping plovers begin arriving on beaches
■ Barred owls court and begin to nest
■ Ospreys return to NJ
Last week:
■ Bald eagle chicks begin to hatch
■ Great blue herons and egrets begin arriving at rookeries

April

- First week:**
■ Ospreys begin nesting
■ Piping plovers begin courting and setting up territories
■ Upland sandpipers return and begin nesting in grasslands and pastures
Second week:
■ Hibernating butterflies begin to appear
■ Hummingbirds arrive
Third week:
■ Coastal herons and egrets begin nesting
■ Piping plovers being incubating eggs
■ Songbirds begin nesting
■ Migrating shorebirds begin arriving on Delaware Bay
Last week:
■ Timber rattlesnakes start emerging from their winter dens
■ Bald eagle chicks very visible at Stow Creek nest