

# SKYLANDS

## New Jersey's Wildlife Action Plan



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### Creating a Network for Conservation

To protect our wildlife of greatest conservation need, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife led many partners to develop and implement the state's Wildlife Action Plan. The plan offers a blueprint to protect key habitats, limit growth to avoid urban sprawl and address climate change. To learn more, please visit: [www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/waphome.htm](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/waphome.htm)



Cover photo: Red-shouldered Hawk, © Blaine J. Rothausen  
Funded by State Wildlife Grants.  
For more information on New Jersey's Wildlife Action Plan contact ENSP at: 609-292-9400

## Conserving and Restoring Habitat Connecting Lands And Waters Cooperating Across Ownerships

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



Adam Mann

### Indiana bat Federal endangered

New Jersey's only known hibernacula (winter roost) for the Indiana bat are in the Skylands. Any disturbance saps the energy they need to survive hibernation. In summer, these bats roost in trees, making them vulnerable to logging, road building and pesticides.



Melissa Craddock

### Timber rattlesnake State endangered

Rocky outcroppings on Skylands' mountain ridges are havens for endangered timber rattlesnakes that prefer to stay away from people.

## Vast Forests and Wetlands Harbor Rare Wildlife

Red-shouldered hawks soar above the Kittatinny Ridge, while bobcats prowl the largest forests in northern New Jersey. This wild retreat for New Jersey's urban northeast is home to birds and animals that depend on the same landscapes that attract people to hike the Appalachian Trail or to picnic along lakeshores and drive through pastoral valleys. Most of the state's native brook trout flourish in the region's clear, cold mountain streams. In the Kittatinny Valley and southern Skylands, meadowlarks sing from farmlands that shelter grassland nesting birds. While public lands in the north offer outstanding conservation opportunities, the main challenge is to protect private forests and their precious wetlands.



Allen Barlow

### Dwarf wedgemussel Federal endangered

This tiny mussel finds its only state foothold in the clear streams of the Skylands, and serves as an indicator of clean water. Mussels function as nature's vacuum cleaners, filtering plankton particles as well as pollutants from the water column.



### Bald eagle State endangered

Lakes and large rivers in north Jersey are home to bald eagles, whose future depends on high-quality riparian habitats.

# Goals and Actions for the Skylands

## Forests: Large and Livable

### Did you know?

Forests protect our drinking water and help purify the air we breathe.

### Goal: Conserve big, intact forests

The mixed hardwoods that blanket the slopes of Kittatinny Ridge and the Highlands typify the big forests that are home to bobcats, timber rattlesnakes, Indiana bats, songbirds, barred owls and red-shouldered hawks that cannot survive in isolated forest patches.

### Action: Identify and protect key private forestlands

Keeping large forests intact will take surveying, identifying and protecting important habitats on private forestlands through purchase, land use regulations and work with landowners.



Gary Stolz

### **Bobcat - State endangered**

The stealthy bobcat prowls the Skylands' remaining large, intact forests. As long as enough large forests and wildlife corridors remain, bobcats will continue to call New Jersey home.

### Goal: Connect forests and habitats

A blue-spotted salamander crawls toward its breeding pond, but stops when it reaches a barrier: a new road cut in the forest. From salamanders to wide-ranging bobcats, wildlife are often blocked or isolated by roads and development.

### Action: Find and care for wildlife corridors

The best hope for wildlife on the move is to protect or restore wooded corridors that connect large forested areas. Planting the appropriate vegetation where needed will provide the food, shelter and travel corridor that animals need.

### Goal: Keep habitats healthy

While nesting goshawks need old, large and closely spaced trees, golden-winged warblers require younger forests and brushy openings. Historically, natural forces like wind and fire created a kaleidoscope of habitats. Today's forests offer fewer habitat choices with the added threats of invasive plants, human disturbance from off-road vehicles and illegal collecting of rare animals.



### **Golden-winged warbler** State endangered

Hope for the imperiled golden-winged warbler, which winters as far south as Venezuela, may rest in managing forests for the shrubby nesting habitat this beautiful songster requires.

### Action: Manage forests for diversity

Mimicking nature's processes to manage forests will provide homes for wildlife at risk. Making those wild homes safe will take controlling invasive plants, enforcing laws and educating people.

## Wetlands: Clean and Connected

### Did you know?

Wetlands recharge our aquifers, lessen the damage from flooding and naturally filter pollutants.

### Goal: Protect wetlands and water quality

Skylands forests harbor limestone fens, vernal pools and other special wetlands. When development isolates one wetland from another, species such as bog turtles become trapped. If the buffers are too small, water quality suffers. At risk are rare damselflies and dragonflies, bog turtles, mussels, wood turtles and long-tailed salamanders.

### Action: Identify and maintain wetland connections and buffers

In some cases, the best way to save bog turtles and other aquatic wildlife is to buy wetlands and to protect the streams that often link them. In other cases, encouraging landowners to plant native vegetation around protected wetlands will increase their effective size.



### **Bog turtle - Federal endangered**

These elusive, palm-sized turtles are habitat specialists living in fens, bogs and wet meadows that are connected so the turtles can disperse and mingle with other populations.



Bobolink/Robert Lin

## Grasslands: Farming with Wildlife in Mind

### Did you know?

Conserving farmlands keeps our sources of food nearby, rather than relying on distant imports.

### Goal: Enhance farmlands to be wildlife-friendly

The farmlands of the Kittatinny Valley and southern Skylands support bobolinks, meadowlarks and vesper sparrows. However, early hay mowing takes a toll on ground-nesting birds.

### Action: Help landowners manage for grassland wildlife

Planting warm season grasses for later mowing and leaving some fields idle will allow grassland birds to nest and raise chicks. Conducting prescribed burns where appropriate will improve wildlife habitat.