

CONSERVE Wildlife

Newsletter of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program
www.njfishandwildlife.com Spring/Summer 2002

Just Say No! To Wildlife Crime

Just four years ago the Endangered and Nongame Species Program's effort to locate more state-endangered bog turtle sites uncovered a Gloucester County wetland that was teeming with the small turtles. Jason Tesauro, senior ENSP zoologist, could often find six of the elusive creatures. Two years ago, though, they were much harder to find. And last year?

"Nothing," he reports. "We didn't find a single turtle all year."

Tesauro suspects illegal wildlife collecting -- one of the principal reasons the bog turtle was placed on the federal threatened list in 1997 -- has decimated the Gloucester County site. Dealers who were breeding bog turtles prior to the 1997 federal listing can still offer captive-bred bog turtles for sale. You can buy one for about \$900. But an illegal black market that depends on wildlife collected in the wild -- and is fueled in part by demand from overseas collectors in Europe and Asia -- also exists.

Bog turtles aren't the only endangered reptiles with big prices on their heads either. State-threatened wood turtles and spotted turtles, which are listed as a species of special concern (both, like the bog turtle, are part of the *Clemmys* family) are also coveted.

Recently a joint undercover investigation that involved the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Pennsylvania Fish

and Boat Commission led to the arrest of a Pennsylvania man who had two bog turtles and at least 50 wood turtles in his possession. The dealer, who was charging about \$50 apiece

for the wood turtles, was fined \$10,000, according to Bill Anderson, a U.S.F.W.S. special agent.

State-endangered corn snakes and state-threatened northern pine snakes are also in demand.

This spring the Division of Fish and Wildlife's ENSP is in the process of bringing together state and federal authorities -- including the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Bureau of Law Enforcement and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -- to address these threats.

In the meantime, your help is needed. If you suspect illegal collecting, report your suspicions to 1-800-222-0456, the Operation Game Thief toll-free hotline sponsored by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs in close cooperation with the Division of Fish and Wildlife. If you desire to remain anonymous, you may do so. Either way, reporting a violation that involves the illegal taking of any endangered species will result in a reward to you of

between \$100 and \$200 if a citation is issued.

So help stamp out wildlife crime. If you see or are aware of illegal wildlife collecting, report it today.

STOP COLLECTING



Photos courtesy of Robert Zappalorti (top and bottom) and Blaine Robhauer (middle).

Bog turtles.

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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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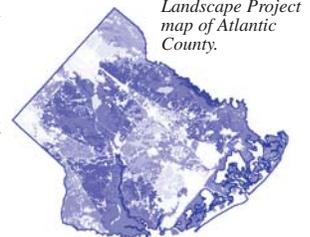
Dynamic Partnership: Many uses for L.P. mapping

Message from Larry Niles, Chief, ENSP

The state is currently considering incorporating Landscape Project mapping -- which delineates critical habitat for rare species -- into New Jersey's freshwater and coastal wetland regulations.

The usefulness of the Landscape Project data, which was developed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program, is already being demonstrated throughout the state.

For example, Passaic County's West Milford Township has been using the data in a multitude of ways for well over a year. The Environmental Commission and Planning Board of the township, which borders New York state, have used it to analyze potential tracts for open space preservation and acquisition. The resulting recommendations have been passed on to the county and township open space committees.



Landscape Project map of Atlantic County.

The township's Planning Board is also using it to review site plans and examine rezoning issues. One developer was asked to avoid a portion of a property that overlapped a designated forested area, while a subdivision applicant was asked to include a Landscape Project review in its environmental impact statement.

Meanwhile, says Robert Sparkes, the township's GIS specialist, "We in the Planning Department have found the Landscape Project to be very useful in our efforts to be in compliance with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan as an environmentally sensitive planning area."

Non-government organizations are also finding the Landscape Project mapping useful. The New Jersey Conservation Foundation is using it as an important tool in its Garden State Greenways Vision, a map-based statewide vision for open space hubs and connective corridors that the foundation has launched in conjunction with the N.J. DEP's Green Acres Program. "It's going to be very valuable for identifying potential hubs and corridors and in assessing potential land acquisition projects to determine whether they are known habitats for species that are endangered, threatened or of special concern," says Adam Mednick, the foundation's Greenways Vision project manager.

Emile DeVito, Ph.D., the foundation's manager of science and stewardship, also endorses the LP's incorporation into freshwater and coastal wetland regulations. "It's a more peer-reviewed approach to how we define critical habits and those judgments should be much more defensible legally and much more accurate regarding the needs of each species," he says.

Sign up now for NJ DFW e-mail updates

The N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife has launched eight electronic mailing lists available by free subscription. You can subscribe now to one or more lists via the division's website to receive periodic e-mail messages related to the state's wildlife and natural resources. You can also unsubscribe at any time.

"We view these lists as a real asset to anyone interested in New Jersey's fish and wildlife," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "These mailing lists will enable us to directly contact and inform interested parties about issues, events and news that concerns wildlife and the habitat it depends on."

The mailing lists topics include:
Endangered Species • New Jersey's Wildlife • Freshwater Fishing
Marine Fisheries • Shellfish • Hunting
Natural Resource Education • Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

To subscribe to one or more of the lists, simply visit the division's website at www.njfishandwildlife.com and click on the link for "Mailing Lists."

RED KNOTS SHOREBIRDS CONTINUE TO PLUMMET IN SOUTH AMERICA

Numbers of wintering red knots – the migrating shorebirds most dependent upon Delaware Bay horseshoe crab eggs during their spring migration to their Arctic breeding grounds – continue to plummet in South America's Tierra del Fuego.

The first study expedition led by the Endangered and Nongame Species Program to the birds' principal wintering grounds on Chile's Bahia Lomas counted 45,150 red knots in 2000. That number declined to 29,335 last year and to just 20,755 birds this past February – a 54 percent decline in just two years.

The declines also mimic declines over the past five years in the number of red knots surveyed each May on the Delaware Bay.

Since the numbers of Hudsonian godwits on the wintering grounds has remained relatively stable, the 16-member team of international shorebird biologists that conducted ground and aerial surveys this year doesn't believe a local catastrophe has decimated the wintering red knots.

"We feel sure that part of the reason for the red knots' population decline is a direct result of reduced production of young," says Larry Niles, Ph.D., the ENSP chief and expedition leader. "That, in turn, is a result of the decreasing availability of horseshoe crab eggs on the Delaware Bay during their critical May stopover en route to their Arctic breeding grounds.

"Without sufficient crab eggs, red knots either cannot reach the Arctic or don't have enough energy reserves to lay eggs, so the number of young decline."

But the magnitude of the declines in Tierra del Fuego indicates that adults might be suffering increased mortality as well.

"This is speculation, of course," says Niles, "but it leaves us more than a little sad to see the changes unfolding so quickly before us."

However, the shorebird biologists did succeed in briefly capturing and banding nearly 250 red knots – the first red knots ever banded in Chile. In addition to metal bands, the birds had small red plastic flags attached to their legs to indicate they were banded in Chile. That's a sufficient number to enable biologists to observe their movements throughout their North and South American flyway – including this May when the ENSP will again sponsor a banding operation and other research on Delaware Bay.

"We also have a sufficient sample of birds to make reasonable estimates of the percent of adults and juveniles in the population," says Niles. "Future years of data should enable us to estimate population size and productivity and, perhaps, answer the riddle of the dramatic loss of birds on their wintering grounds."

For more information, check out Niles' field reports at www.njfishandwildlife.com

ENSP News Update

Drought impacts amphibians

The drought appears to have had a dramatic negative impact on amphibian breeding this year. That's particularly true of frog and salamander species, including state-endangered Eastern tiger and blue-spotted salamanders, which breed exclusively in vernal pools -- pools that dry up during the summer, keeping them free of preying fish.



Normally brimming with water each spring, most vernal pools have remained dry this year.

Because most of the vernal pools have remained dry, ENSP biologists expect many of these amphibians won't reproduce this year.

"Winter precipitation is key," says Jason Tesauro, senior ENSP zoologist. "Usually the ponds are half or completely full by mid-March because of snow melt and winter rains, but they were bone dry in mid-March."

In South Jersey, where ENSP seasonal wildlife biologists Cristina Frank and Craig James have been visiting vernal pools since August, "Ninety-five percent are dry," reports Frank. That's bad news for Eastern tiger salamanders, which usually begin breeding in late January. Frank and James have found no Eastern tiger salamanders or any of their egg masses.

In North Jersey, Tesauro says later breeders such as blue-spotted and Jefferson salamanders might be able to push back breeding if spring rains prove adequate.

Regardless, says Tesauro, "Because of their life spans -- blue-spotted salamanders, for instance, can live up to five years, maybe more -- these species can withstand a year without breeding. But a catastrophic drought of three to five years would cause some serious population crashes."

Cohansey River Impoundments

The Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program has applied for a federal grant to construct an impoundment system along the Cohansey River that would benefit a multitude of bird species. The proposal is part of the Delaware Bay Initiative, a major agreement between the state Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Delaware Division of Fish and Game and Ducks Unlimited to restore 15,000 acres of wetlands and associated uplands.

Constructed on the west side of the Cohansey just downstream from Greenwich, the first dike would benefit both migrating shorebirds and waterfowl as it controls water levels on a wetland that drains into the river. A higher impoundment on the same wetland would benefit waterfowl and waterbirds, such as herons. Uplands surrounding the wetland would also be protected, thus benefiting migrating land birds.

ENSP has applied for funds from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which in part supports the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The impoundments would become part of an anticipated system along the Delaware Bay that, in Cape May County, would include new gates at a Heislerville impoundment and a Higbee Beach impoundment.

Watchable Wildlife:

This spring and summer, check out these Watchable Wildlife sites:

Belleplain State Forest

Belleplain contains the state's greatest variety of habitats: saltwater marsh, Atlantic white cedar swamp, mixed hardwood swamp and oak-hickory forest. In both the spring and fall, this forest sparkles with the color of migrating songbirds such as blue-winged and cerulean warblers, scarlet tanagers and prothonotary warblers, as well as interior-forest raptors such as red-shouldered hawks and barred owls. Black and white warblers and red-tailed hawks haunt the forest's edge.

To best experience Belleplain, drive south on NJ Rt. 47, turn right onto Jake's Landing Road and right again onto Beaver Causeway Road, which returns to Rt. 47. Continuing on Jakes Landing Road takes you into the equally magnificent Dennis Creek Wildlife Management Area. Or, at Belleplain, hike the 1.5-mile trail around Lake Nummy or the 6.5-mile trail that connects the lake with East Creek Pond.

Directions: From U.S. 9 in Oceanview, take County Rt. 550 west for about 8 mi. to the state forest office.

Information: NJ Div. of Parks and Forestry, 609-861-2404.

Celery Farm Conservation Area

This flooded former celery farm owned by Allendale Borough is now a small freshwater wetland with overgrown fields, hardwood swamps, uplands and open water -- 97 acres in the middle of suburban development. Among the 225 bird species recorded year-round are dramatic numbers of nesting and migratory marsh birds that arrive in the spring. A 1.3-mile lakeside trail can offer views of red-winged blackbirds, yellow warblers, great egrets, double-crested cormorants, green herons, willow flycatchers, Virginia rails, common moorhens and soras.

Directions: Take Garden State Parkway Exit 165 for Ridgewood Ave. west. Travel 0.8 mi. to N.J. 17 north. Travel north 5.3 mi. to the Allendale exit. Follow East Allendale Ave. west for 1 mi. to Franklin Turnpike. Turn right and go 0.3 mi. to parking lot on right.

Information: Allendale Borough, 201-327-3470.

The Calls of the Wild: *ENSP offers Herp Field Guide, CD*

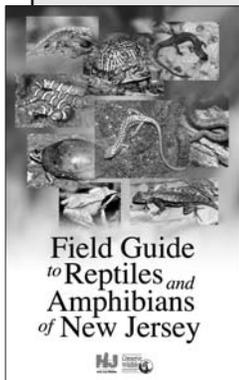
The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's ENSP has produced and is offering a *Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey* and a related CD, *Calls of New Jersey Frogs and Toads*.

Written by David M. Golden, an ENSP assistant biologist, and author Vicki Schwartz, the field guide contains 72 detailed descriptions of reptiles and amphibians that occur in N.J. With more than 100 full-color pictures and 72 distribution maps, this spiral-bound, 89-page guide will be useful for amateurs and experts alike.

The CD has 38 tracks -- both training tracks and tracks on which you can test your skill -- of 16 different species. Including shipping and handling, the field guide and CD are available for \$10 each, or \$18 for both purchased simultaneously.

To order either the field guide and/or the CD, send a check with the appropriate amount payable to: Conserve

Wildlife Foundation of NJ, PO Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400. Att: Reptiles and Amphibians Field Guide/CD.



May

First week:

- Peregrine falcons hatch.
- Sanderlings and ruddy turnstones arrive.

Second week:

- Red knots begin arriving.
- Neotropical songbirds begin courting each other, forming pairs and building nests.

Third week:

- Shorebird numbers peak on Delaware Bay.
- Piping plovers begin hatching.
- Songbirds begin hatching.

Fourth week:

- Ospreys begin hatching.
- Least terns begin nesting.

June

First week:

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

Second week:

- Northern pine snakes begin laying eggs.

Third week:

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

July

First week:

- Bald eagles begin fledging.
- Herons and egrets begin fledging.

Second week:

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

Third week:

- Adult shorebirds begin migrating southbound thru NJ coastal areas.

Wildlife Conservation Corps Citizen Scientist Opportunities

Beach Nesting Bird Project

The Endangered and Nongame Species Program is looking for dedicated, hard working volunteers to assist with the beach nesting bird monitoring program this summer. Opportunities exist in all coastal counties, but especially Cape May County. Duties will include locating and monitoring nesting piping plovers, least terns and black skimmers, installing and maintaining protective fence and educating the beach-going public. Volunteers will be expected to commit to a regular schedule that includes weekend days. A minimum of 25 hours (approximately five 5-hour days) is required. Volunteers should enjoy interacting with the public, be in good physical condition, be willing to spend long periods on the beach during hot weather and have their own binoculars. Training will be provided. For more information contact Larissa Smith at 609-628-2103 or llsmith@gtc3.com.

Delaware Bay, Highlands and Piedmont bird surveys

The ENSP is looking for very experienced birders to help it conduct point-count surveys of land birds in both the Delaware Bay and Highland Landscape regions between May 25 and June 15. The surveys will replicate similar surveys that were conducted in both areas in the mid-90s. Repeating the surveys will enable the program to begin monitoring population trends, particularly among both state-endangered and threatened species and declining species of special concern, such as a number of neotropical migrants. The surveys will also provide valuable data concerning critical habitats that have been identified by the ENSP's Landscape Project.

The ENSP would also like to begin filling a significant information gap by recruiting birders to conduct surveys on public lands in the Piedmont Landscape, an urban corridor that stretches between Philadelphia and NYC.

Interested birders capable of identifying eastern birds by sight and song should contact Sharon DeFalco a.s.a.p. at 609-777-4194 or at sdfalco@dep.state.nj.us

Urban Wildlife Survey Project

Volunteers -- especially those experienced in wildlife identification, as well as novices interested in being mentored -- are needed to conduct general wildlife surveys that will focus on nongame, endangered and threatened species in urban areas. This is a major new effort for the Wildlife Conservation Corps' Citizen Scientist Program. Volunteers are needed in Bergen, Camden, Middlesex and Passaic, as well as Burlington, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Monmouth, Morris and Union counties.

The CW Mailbox: *Elegy for the A.C. peregrine*

"Just received your *Conserve Wildlife* Winter/Spring 2002 issue and your featured story of the A.C. peregrine and her passing. The story was very poignant ... and tastefully done. She seemed quite a bird ... a tribute to her species ... and obviously a Grand Mother.

"Thank you and all those related to the fostering and saving of our wildlife."

Patricia Otteben
Chatham Township, N.J.

EDITOR'S NOTE: An apparently young female peregrine has bonded with the surviving male at the Atlantic City Hilton casino nesting site.



IT'S A CRITICAL TIME FOR BUTTERFLY GARDENS

If you've ever considered planting a butterfly garden, now is the year to do it -- for two critical reasons:

⊙ A mid-January torrential rain followed by a deep freeze killed what has been estimated as more than 80 percent of the 100 million monarch butterflies on their wintering grounds in the mountain forests of central Mexico.

⊙ The drought in the Northeast could have significant impacts on many butterfly species this summer.

"This year, more than any, butterfly gardens will be needed," says Pat Sutton the program director of New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory who has been gardening for butterflies for more than 15 years.

Continued drought conditions will stunt the growth of wild flowers that adult butterflies rely on for nectar, she says. "Wild nectar is going to be hard to come by," she predicts.

Also, dry conditions could impact the host plants upon which butterflies lay their eggs. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs exclusively on milkweed plants, including common milkweed, which is common in meadows and along roadsides -- and commonly mowed down. Common milkweed, swamp milkweed and butterfly weed -- all perennial milkweed plants -- are also a source of nectar for many butterfly species.

For all these reasons, Sutton believes home gardeners may be able to provide crucial sustenance for butterflies this year. And don't think it's too late to start if you're reading this in May. All a monarch butterfly needs to lay its eggs is a half-inch milkweed shoot. After arriving sometime in April, monarch butterflies go through five generations before that final generation starts fluttering towards the wintering grounds in Mexico.

For more information on butterflies and butterfly gardening, visit:

How to Create a Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden by Pat Sutton
<http://www.njaudubon.org/NatureNotes/Garden.html>

Monarch Watch: www.MonarchWatch.org

Journey North: Track the northern migration of monarch butterflies and many other species:
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/spring2002/species/monarch/index.html>

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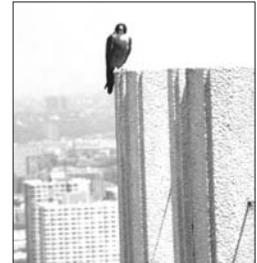
Conserve Wildlife Foundation News

MESSAGE FROM LINDA TESAURO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Peregrine Falcon Webcam Returns!

For the second year, a wildlife webcam will be in place for you to see one of nature's great wonders: peregrine falcons raising their young high atop New Jersey's tallest building. For several years, a pair of these state-endangered falcons has called 101 Hudson Street in Jersey City home. Our biologists placed a nest box on the roof and the birds took to it right away.

Click on www.njfishandwildlife.com or www.conservewildlifenj.org to see these magnificent birds raise their chicks. This rare opportunity lets you witness the miracle of a young peregrine growing from a ball of fuzz to the size of an adult bird in only a matter of weeks! Also, make sure to look for the special teachers' page that includes lesson plans and activities to help kids learn about peregrine falcons. A special thanks to Verizon for providing the generous funding for the webcam.



Be A Partner in Protection This Spring

"A little in abundance is a lot!"

Spring is here! From the banding of shorebirds, eagles, ospreys and peregrines to searching for vernal pools, tracking bobcats, building nest structures, training volunteers, etc., this is without a doubt the busiest time of year for our biologists.

All this important work to protect N.J.'s fragile wildlife species takes a tremendous amount of money and resources. That is why we ask you for your support this spring. If you care about wildlife preservation, and I know you do since you receive this newsletter, please take a moment to fill out the enclosed envelope with a contribution.

Whether it's five dollars or \$500, every dollar helps, because a little in abundance is a lot! Remember, the biologists of the Endangered and Nongame Species Program receive NO dedicated state funding and depend upon donations from compassionate people like you to help finance all their conservation work. Thanks for being our partner in protection, and happy spring!

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