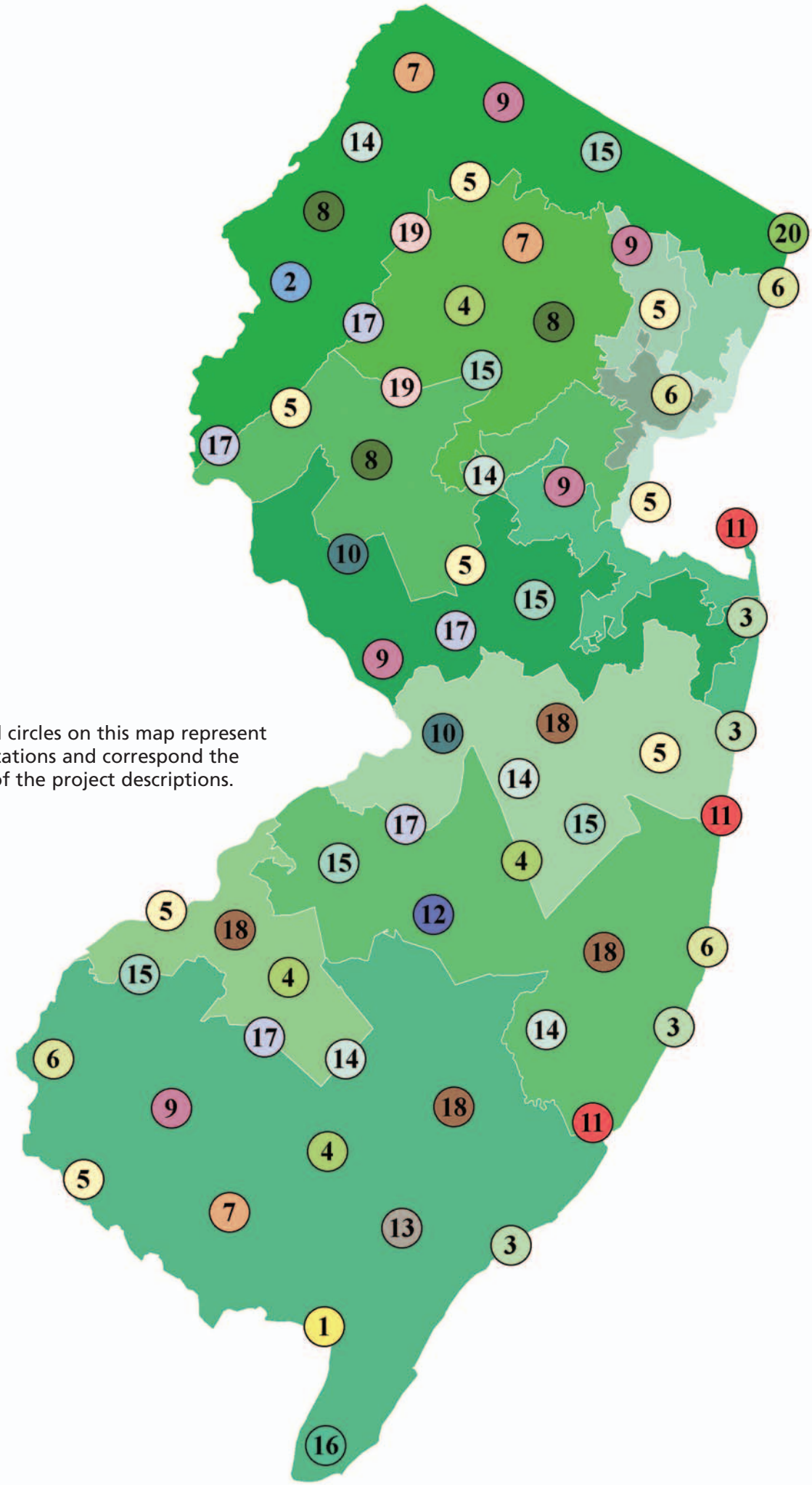
State Wildlife Grant Project Summaries 2011

New Jersey Wildlife Action Plan

Numbered circles on this map represent project locations and correspond the numbers of the project descriptions.



State Wildlife Grants Spell Success in New Jersey

New Jersey has a rich biodiversity, one that belies its urban aspect and small size. It is home to over 300 species of birds, over 90 species of mammals and uncounted species of invertebrates. New Jersey's rich biodiversity is due to its climate that brings both southern and northern species to the extent of their respective ranges, its myriad of habitats that can support wide-ranging bobcats and close-to-home butterflies and, its physical location that sees the passage of hundreds of thousands of birds twice every year during spring and fall migration.

Of New Jersey's rich biodiversity, over 70 species are protected on the state's Endangered and Threatened list and hundreds of others are considered of special concern. These species are being monitored, researched and recovered by the biologists of the state's Division of Fish and Wildlife Endangered and Nongame Species Program and their partners. Their work is being supported by the State Wildlife Grants which provide federal funds to species conservation.

In New Jersey, the State Wildlife Grants are being used to implement the State's Wildlife Action Plan, a blueprint for rare wildlife protection in the state. The Plan allows state biologists and their partners to easily know what actions they need to implement in their region of the state to support the continued conservation or recovery of an endangered or rare species. State Wildlife Grants are designed to conserve wildlife before they become rarer and more costly to protect and recover.

This document details how New Jersey is using State Wildlife Grants to implement the Wildlife Action Plan and strengthen New Jersey biodiversity. Some of the projects contained here are new efforts while others have been in place for many years. The Bald Eagle project, a longstanding effort to restore New Jersey's bald eagle population, illustrates clearly that dedicated staff, dependable funding and healthy partnerships can recover a species that was once on the brink of disappearing from the Garden State.

Each project is summarized to allow the reader to understand its objective and its recent successes. Each project leader can provide a field opportunity for an interested observer an opportunity to experience wildlife from the unique perspective of a wildlife biologist.

Wildlife conservation in the United States has an unmatched record of success due to the willingness of the American people to invest in protecting fish and wildlife and the natural lands and waters they depend on for survival. This document clearly illustrates the return on this investment.

Many of the projects described in this summary provide hands-on field trip opportunities. The initial point of contact to arrange a field trip on any project is Paulette Nelson, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Federal Aid Coordinator.

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1 Saving Globally-Declining Shorebirds on Delaware Bay

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, New Jersey Natural Lands and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, British Trust for Ornithology, Richard Stockton College of NJ, Rutgers University, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, Royal Ontario Museum, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, Universidad de Santo Tomas, Chile, Fundación Inalafquen, Argentina, and 40+ volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: District 2

Project Summary: The Delaware Bay is an internationally-important stopover for tens-of-thousands of migratory shorebirds, including a candidate for federal listing, the red knot. Spring shorebird migration coincides with the annual spawn of horseshoe crabs. Shorebirds rely on abundant horseshoe crab eggs to fuel their migration, and the Delaware Bay hosts the single largest breeding population of horseshoe crabs in the Western Hemisphere. Each spring, biologists track numbers and physical condition of shorebirds on Delaware Bay as they stopover enroute to Arctic nesting grounds. Biologists capture, measure, and mark four species of shorebirds with leg-flags and count birds by air and ground. On-the-ground protection includes closing important shorebird foraging beaches and providing viewing areas, manned by trained volunteers, where the public can see and learn about shorebirds and horseshoe crabs.

SWG Successes: In 2010, we saw for the first time the migratory pathway of red knots using new, cost-efficient technology -- light-sensitive geolocators. We also saw improvement in the number of red knots that gained adequate migration weight and, improvement in the number of male horseshoe crabs coming ashore to spawn.

Opportunities for field trips: Visitors are welcome to work side-by-side with biologists to capture and band shorebirds several days per week from May 7 through June 2, on wild and scenic Delaware bayshore beaches in Cape May and Cumberland counties.

2 Discovering Underwater Treasures - Endangered Mussels

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

Congressional district(s) for project: District 5

Project Summary: Our goals are to locate and study state listed freshwater mussels and develop conservation strategies to help in their recovery. This work includes surveys in suitable stream habitats and enlists the help of trained volunteers to create a New Jersey freshwater mussel atlas. Some of the best stream habitat for rare mussels can be found in Warren County, where we monitor populations of the federally endangered dwarf wedgemussel.

SWG Successes: Since 2004, SWG funding has allowed ENSP biologists to survey and/or monitor over 100 stream sites state-wide. Information collected through the state listed mollusk project is critical to the Department's ongoing effort to upgrade stream classifications and protect water quality throughout the state.

Opportunities for field trips: Freshwater mussel surveys, June through September.

3 Protecting and Restoring Beach Nesting Birds

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, ESA Section 6 USFWS, Anitra Oil Spill Natural Resource Damages Restoration, DEP Beach Replenishment funds

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, USFWS, Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, Cape May National NWR, and NJ Field Office; National Park Service, US Coast Guard; The Nature Conservancy, Monmouth County Park System; NJ Division of Parks and Forestry; numerous coastal communities, 100+ volunteers assist with fencing projects in spring.

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 2, 3, 4, and 6

Project Summary: This project focuses on long-term monitoring and management of breeding populations of beach nesting birds, including American oystercatcher, least tern, black skimmer, and especially the federal threatened piping plover. Strong emphasis is placed on minimizing impacts caused by human recreational activity and predators. This is achieved in many ways, including fencing/posting of breeding areas, patrolling sites, placement of predator cages around nests, and working closely with coastal communities and landowners to develop management plans.

SWG Successes: In recent years, 15 beach management plans have been developed for New Jersey coastal communities. A record-level fledgling rate (1.39 chicks/pair) was realized for piping plovers in 2010, in part, as a result of intensive management efforts.

Opportunities for field trips: 1) Erection of predator exclosures around piping plover nests in May and June, 2) Observe piping plover chicks and active least tern and/or black skimmer colonies from late June-early August, 3) American Oystercatcher banding from April-early July.

4 NJ Herp Atlas Project-Getting citizens involved in conservation

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ

Congressional district(s) for project: All districts

Project Summary: The goal of the Herp Atlas Project is to document distribution and relative abundance of New Jersey's reptiles and amphibians through comprehensive citizen-based surveys and to integrate these findings into the state's rare wildlife database and habitat mapping products. In 2002, the Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey was published. Data that had been submitted by volunteers was used to produce the species range maps. Knowing distribution and relative abundance of New Jersey's reptiles and amphibians will direct conservation management that will help common species remain common and keep these species from being listed on federal endangered species lists.

SWG Successes: 91volunteers across the state submitted thousands of sightings of reptiles and amphibians during the past 15 years. In 2010, the Herp Atlas project was closed to new submissions and we hope to publish the results soon.

Opportunities for field trips: Field trips to search for reptiles and amphibians can be arranged March through June.

5 Bringing Back Bald Eagles

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, private landowners, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Park Service, and approximately 60 volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 12

Project Summary: Biologists work with landowners and trained volunteers to watch every nest during the January-to-July nesting season to record progress and outcome, and identify problems that require action. Biologists visit 10-12 nests in late April through May, climb the nest tree, and evaluate and leg-band young eagles. Nest sites are tracked statewide as the population has climbed and expanded to 17 of 21 counties of NJ. With removal from the federal Endangered Species List in 2007, the bald eagle's full recovery and viability is now solely the responsibility of the state, which must address local and statewide conservation issues.

SWG Successes: The bald eagle population has doubled in the last five years, to 82 nesting pairs across the state of New Jersey.

Opportunities for field trips: Bald eagle nest visits/chick banding take place approximately April 15 to June 1.

6 Following Peregrine Falcons

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: CWF of NJ, Delaware River Port Authority, Burlington County Bridge Comm., Palisades Interstate Park Comm., U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Atlantic City Hilton, and approximately 10 volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 2, 3, 5, and 9

Project Summary: Peregrines now nest along the coastal salt marshes, buildings in Atlantic City, Jersey City and Elizabeth, and on the largest state and interstate bridges. Most exciting, peregrines have become reestablished on the natural cliff habitat in Bergen County where they nested prior to their decline. Volunteers and staff track nests to record progress and outcome, and biologists visit most nests to leg-band young falcons. NJ falcons have boosted the mid-Atlantic population and the species' recovery across several eastern states.

SWG Successes: Absent from New Jersey in the 1960's, the peregrine population is now stable with 20 pairs statewide and nests reestablished at historic nest sites at the Palisades.

Opportunities for field trips: Peregrine falcon nest visits take place approximately May 15 to June 10. Most sites are remote, while building sites are most accessible. Visitors may observe and participate in banding of young falcons.

7 Cleaning House for the Rare and Elusive Bog Turtle

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, Landowner Incentive Program, Natural Resources Conservation Services, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife, ESA Section 6, USFWS NJ Field Office

Partners: The Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, passionate landowners, dedicated group of volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: District 2, 5, and 11

Project Summary: Biologists have actively worked with many willing partners to find suitable wetland habitat on both private and public lands that may have the rare, federally threatened bog turtle. In Sussex, Warren, and Salem Counties, biologists have worked cooperatively with dozens of private landowners to both count and protect these secretive turtles. A wide variety of habitat improvement techniques have been developed and implemented on 15 different properties this past year. More than 75 acres of land has been managed including using cows, goats, and sheep to graze wetlands that are degraded by exotic and invasive plants. Increased nesting has been observed at restored sites which can lead to healthier populations. Other nearby states in the bog turtles range are engaged in similar work and with time, these combined efforts will move the bog turtle to recovery and off of the federal endangered species list.

SWG Successes: Managing 15 bog turtle sites on over 75 acres of land has lead to increased nesting and healthier bog turtle populations in New Jersey.

Opportunities for field trips: May and June are the best months to observe field work and bog turtles.

8 Responding to a Bat Crisis

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, Landowner Incentive Program, USFWS

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, USFWS, BATS Research Center, and approximately 75 volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 5, 7, and 11

Project Summary: Since bats began dying from White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) in January 2009, the bat project shifted emphasis to studying and offsetting this catastrophic fungal disease. The volunteer-based Summer Bat Count grew to nearly 60 participants in 2010, providing the state with information on bat colonies across 16 counties. More than 500 bats were banded with ID tags, and a number of them are being monitored in Hibernia Mine (Morris Co.) to track the progression of White-Nose Syndrome during hibernation. Biologists are working with 15 private landowners to enhance forest habitat for tree bats like the federally endangered Indiana bat (Myotis sodalis), and have begun using acoustic detectors to catalog bat species across NJ's landscape. A public education campaign reached more than 1,000 residents, school children, land managers, and wildlife control professionals and has deployed more than 200 bat houses state-wide.

SWG Successes: Increased participation in the Summer Bat Count, more than 500 bats banded, 15 private landowners engaged in bat habitat management and over 200 bat houses installed.

Opportunities for field trips: Summer Bat Count surveys are done at dusk May through July. Acoustic surveys can take place from mid-April through mid-October. Summer maternity colony monitoring begins in mid-July and continues to mid-August.

9 Proactive Habitat Protection – The Landscape Project

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NatureServe, General Public

Congressional district(s) for project: All districts

Project Summary: In 1994, the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program adopted a landscape level approach to endangered, threatened and other rare species conservation. The goal of the project is centered on protecting New Jersey's biological diversity by maintaining and enhancing imperiled and rare wildlife populations within healthy, intact landscapes. For the first time, a mapped depiction of habitat critical to the survival of imperiled and rare wildlife species was made available to the public and is currently used by many land use regulation programs. Organizations interested in imperiled and rare wildlife conservation can use Landscape Project maps to identify areas to focus their efforts and the maps are valuable tools for proactive land use planning.

SWG Successes: Habitat critical to the survival and management of rare and imperiled wildlife in the state is mapped in a format accessible to the public.

Opportunities for field trips: Training programs on how to use the Landscape maps are scheduled at various locations through out the state. See *http://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/ensp/landscape_train.htm* for schedules.

10 Houses for Hawks - Providing Nesting Boxes for American Kestrel

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, various schools, scout troops, municipalities, county park systems, non-profit organizations, corporations, private citizens, and approximately 40 volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 4, 7, 9, and 12

Project Summary: Populations of American kestrels have been declining throughout parts of its range, including New Jersey. Since 2006 ENSP has maintained a nest box program for kestrels that can be nest site limited. Success rates and nest box use in large contiguous patches of suitable habitat has been consistently high throughout the project. Wood for the nest boxes is donated by a lumber company and nest box kits are assembled by schools and scout troops. Nest boxes are monitored throughout the breeding season by ENSP staff and trained volunteers. These efforts are designed to keep this once common species that is now regionally declining from further decline and restore it to the landscape.

SWG Successes: 275 kestrel nest boxes have 84% use and 60% success rate.

Opportunities for field trips: ENSP checks nest boxes for kestrel eggs and chicks between May and June. ENSP bands kestrel chicks in June.

11 Seal Research - Mapping New Jersey's Wintertime Wonders

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Richard Stockton College of NJ, Marine Mammal Stranding Center, National Marine Fisheries Service

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 2, 3, 4, and 6

Project Summary: Our goal was to develop a seal conservation plan that identifies and protects overwintering colonies and haul-out areas. Information on seal locations was collected through literature searches, sighting reports and surveys. All sightings were entered into the Biotics database and threats have been identified at each location. Major seal colonies/haul-out areas have confirmed in three areas of the state: Sandy Hook, Barnegat Inlet and Great Bay. The population at the Great Bay colony, the largest seal colony on the US East Coast south of Long Island, has increased since monitoring of the site began in 1993. A maximum count of 20 individuals was observed in 1993 and by 2008 that number had climbed to 155 individuals. Similarly, at the Sandy Hook colony, numbers of seals have increased with up to 74 individuals observed at one time in 2010 – the highest count ever documented at that colony. As we learn more about the habitat needs of seals in New Jersey we will implement plans to protect haul-out areas and wintering colonies.

SWG Successes: At the Great Bay Colony, 155 individual seals were counted in 2008, a huge increase on 20 individuals observed in 1993.

Opportunities for field trips: Seals can be observed at the 3 haul-out areas and elsewhere along the New Jersey shoreline between November and April.

12 Protecting water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, Critical Habitat Mitigation Funds

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, NJ Forest Service, NJ Division of Parks and Forestry

Congressional district(s) for project: District 3

Project Summary: Atlantic-white cedar (AWC) is an evergreen tree that defines the character of forested wetlands in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. It is a valuable tree, both for its use in wood products and from the unique habitat it provides. Since European settlers colonized North America, levels of AWC have declined to levels where only 22% of original stands now exist. Our goal is to help restore Atlantic-white cedar forests through restoration and proper management of existing stands. Cedar forests or swamps provide suitable habitat for a variety of endangered, threatened, and rare wildlife including the barred owl, Pine Barrens treefrog, timber rattlesnake, and the Hessel's hairstreak (a butterfly) whose larva feed exclusively on the foliage of AWC.

SWG Successes: Since 2008, we have helped fund the restoration of 50 acres of Atlantic-white cedar forests. This now brings the total restored state-wide to 250 acres.

Opportunities for field trips: Atlantic-white cedar restoration sites, Bass River State Forest, Bass River Township, New Jersey.

13 Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Institute for Bird Populations, volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: District 2

Project Summary: The Bear Swamp Natural Area, located in Cumberland County, has been designated as an Important Bird Area in New Jersey. This Area consists of over 10,000 acres of hardwood swamp forest and has been the site of a long-term monitoring project for many songbird species for over 15 years. This information tells us that the Bear Swamp Natural Area is optimal breeding habitat for songbirds and needs to be protected and maintained to help stop the declines of many songbirds in New Jersey. Identifying, protecting and managing key landscapes like Bear Swamp will help keep common species common and off of the federal endangered and threatened species lists.

SWG Successes: Although populations of wildlife naturally fluctuate, each year in the last four years we documented the highest productivity in the first 10 years of this monitoring project.

Opportunities for field trips: Accompany biologist in the early morning between the end of May and beginning of August.

14 Butterfly surveys

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ and The Nature Conservancy

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12

Project Summary: Our goals are to survey for, and study, rare butterflies and create conservation and management plans to aid in their recovery. NJ is home to 14 species of rare butterflies and to the largest remaining populations of two rare species of butterfly in the United States, Frosted Elfin and Northern Metalmark. New Jersey contains several of the last remaining populations of Arogos Skipper in the Eastern United States (the next closest populations are in North Carolina and Florida). Our research involves state-wide surveys conducted with the help of volunteers. As a result of this work, we can identify habitats that require active management for these species and help protect the species from decline. Habitat management for rare butterflies is taking place on both public and private lands in New Jersey.

SWG Successes: Checkered White and Bronze Copper have recently been rediscovered after an absence of 30 years in parts of their former range in New Jersey.

Opportunities for field trips: Butterfly surveys occur from April-September depending on flight periods.

15 Dragonflies and Damselflies

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ and The Nature Conservancy

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12

Project Summary: Our goals are to survey for and study rare dragonflies and damselflies (odonates) and create conservation and management plans to aid their recovery. NJ is home to 33 species of rare odonata. Our research involves state-wide surveys conducted with the help of volunteers and habitat management on public and private property. Dragonflies are important indicators of water quality and many rare species are highly sensitive to water quality changes. Dragonflies are also important for mosquito control. The adults and nymphs both consume mosquito larvae and adults respectively. The nymphs also serve as an important food source for native fish. By creating conservation and management plans, we hope to maintain the strength of New Jersey's diverse dragonfly and damselfly populations.

SWG Successes: During this past field season 13 news sites were discovered for 9 species of rare dragonfly in New Jersey.

Opportunities for field trips: Dragonfly surveys occur from April through September depending on the species and flight periods.

16 Searching For "Tigers" Protecting Eastern Tiger Salamanders in New Jersey's Outer Coastal Plain

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Congressional district(s) for project: District 2

Project Summary: One of New Jersey's rarest amphibians, this species exists in low numbers in less than 15 documented breeding locations in the state. Staff visits known breeding ponds to assess population numbers each year and conducts surveys of new sites in an effort to gain a better understanding of this species statewide distribution. Staff is also working on plans to create new breeding ponds in appropriate locations on state-owned lands within this species' NJ range. Beginning in 2011 our staff will partner with the Cape May County Zoo on a head-starting program that will entail the zoo raising larval salamanders at their facility for release into newly constructed ponds. Similar efforts throughout the mid-Atlantic region are helping to restore this once-common species and hopefully preclude the need for federal protection.

SWG Successes: We are using state land protection programs and landowner incentive programs to create or maintain undisturbed forest corridors between documented tiger salamander ponds.

Opportunities for field trips: Field visits of breeding pools possible throughout the year. However, adult tiger salamanders and egg masses only in pools from December – March. Larvae in ponds from March-June. Construction of new vernal pools will be taking place during August and September.

17 Creating Special Grasslands for Rare Birds

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants (planning), Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Partners: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USFW Service, Quail Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 11

Project Summary: Native warm season grasses were planted on 17 acres on portions of 4 Wildlife Management Areas in Warren county to create feeding and nesting habitat for a variety of grassland birds, including the vesper, grasshopper and savanna sparrows (all threatened in NJ). An additional 200 acres will be planted during the next two years. Other species expected to benefit from this project include the American kestrel, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, bobwhite quail, eastern bluebird, goldfinch, and whip-poor-will as well as rare butterflies.

SWG Successes: Four Wildlife Management Areas in Warren County have converted acres to grassland for rare songbirds.

Opportunities for field trips: Throughout the year, planting occurs in May & June

18 Using Fire to Keep Fields Healthy for Wildlife

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Partners: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and NJ Forest Fire Service

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4

Project Summary: Prescribed burns are carefully designed to save fallow fields from growing up into forested areas. The Division of Fish and Wildlife and NJ Forest Fire Service conducted prescribed burns on 77 acres of grasslands on portions of Black River Wildlife Management Area in Chester Twp Morris Co. Species expected to benefit from this project include state-threatened grasshopper, savanna and vesper sparrows, American kestrel, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, bobwhite quail, eastern bluebird, goldfinch, whip-poor-will and rare butterflies.

SWG Successes: 77 acres of grasslands in Morris County are maintained through prescribed burns to benefit rare grassland birds and other species.

Opportunities for field trips: As conditions permit in January through March.

19 Bobcats in a Suburbanizing Environment

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

Partners: Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, 10-15 Wildlife Conservation Corp volunteers

Congressional district(s) for project: Districts 5, 7, and 11

Project Summary: The ENSP is using a combination of cutting edge technology and volunteer participation to learn important information about New Jersey's endangered bobcat population. ENSP biologists and volunteers are live-trapping bobcats and fitting them with GPS/VHF collars to determine home range sizes, habitat requirements, movement patterns and how roads affect movements in the highly urbanized landscape of NJ. Trained volunteers are helping to collect bobcat location data that will help us identify and protect critical habitat. Using a "working dog", biologists are collecting genetic data that is providing critical information about the size, structure and distribution of NJ's bobcat population. ENSP staff worked with biologists from NY, PA and Maine to gather genetic data from those states that enabled us to evaluate the genetic structure of NJ's population so we can better understand its prospects for the future.

SWG Successes: Collection of bobcat data has shown that all suitable habitat in the area north of I-80 and west of Rt. 287 appears to be occupied with bobcat and the population seems to be increasing.

Opportunities for field trips: Working dog field surveys in North Jersey from January to April. Live-trapping in North Jersey from January to March.

20 Conserving Remnant Allegheny Woodrat Population

Funding source(s): State Wildlife Grants

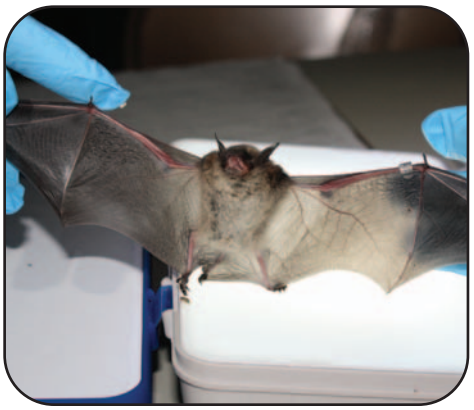
Partners: Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Union College (NY), Purdue University (Indiana)

Congressional district(s) for project: District 5

Project Summary: ENSP biologists are keeping a close watch on the health of NJ's last woodrat population that inhabits the rock slides at the base of the Palisade cliffs in Bergen County. Populations have disappeared in NY and CT and the NJ population now defines the northern and eastern extent of the species' range in North America. Biologists annually live-trap Allegheny woodrats to monitor the population size and structure and assess the threat from raccoon roundworm infection - a parasite that virtually always causes the death of the host animal. After three consecutive years of decline, the population rebounded in 2010 after ENSP staff increased efforts to control raccoon roundworm infections in the local raccoon population. Genetic testing has begun to determine if inbreeding depression is a potential threat to the future of the population. Habitat improvement work is scheduled to begin in 2011.

SWG Successes: Annual monitoring recorded a 77% increase in the capture rate for woodrats from 2008 to 2010. This rebound follows 4 full years of decline. Intensive management efforts likely caused this increase in capture rate.

Opportunities for field trips: Live trapping at the base of the Palisades from September to early October annually.



Photographs by:
Allen Barlow (Dragonfly),
Chris Davidson (Bobcat),
Brett Klaproth (Seal),
Bill Steiner (Cover) and the staffs of
Endangered and Nongame Species
Program and Conserve Wildlife
Foundation of New Jersey.