

# Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan

## Summary

To conserve Pennsylvania's diverse wildlife, maintain its role in ecological processes, and protect and enhance species of greatest conservation need.



photo-Hal Korber, PGC (Barn owl)



photo-Andy Shields, PFBC (Wood turtle)



photo-Tom Diez, PFBC (Eastern spadefoot toad)

## 1. Introduction

Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan is a major achievement in natural resources management. It will serve as a valuable blueprint for agencies and non-governmental organizations to cooperatively and proactively address the concerns of our species of greatest conservation need. Integral to this planning effort, also referred to as the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), are actions to address increasing threats to these species such as habitat fragmentation, water quantity and quality, and invasive species.

This plan promotes and champions *"Pennsylvanians working together to attain sustainable wildlife populations, communities and ecosystems and to prevent and reverse the declines of species."* In collaboration with our partners, we will actively fulfill this vision and the five overarching statewide goals identified in the planning process. These goals are:

**Goal 1:** Improve the scientific basis for making conservation decisions for wildlife with special emphasis on species of greatest conservation concern.

**Goal 2:** Plan, prioritize, and implement actions that will conserve the state's diversity of wildlife and its habitat.

**Goal 3:** Develop a knowledgeable citizenry that supports and participates in wildlife conservation.

**Goal 4:** Ensure necessary resources are available to conserve Pennsylvania's wildlife.

**Goal 5:** Expand and improve coordination of public agencies and other partners in wildlife conservation planning and implementation.

This plan will help us fulfill our responsibility to conserve wildlife and the places where it lives, for future generations.



photo-Rob Criswell, PGC (Short-eared owl)

## 2. Headline Quotes

"The Wildlife Action Plan is strategic action that proactively manages and safeguards Pennsylvania's declining fish and wildlife."

- Carl Roe, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Game Commission

"The health of our fish and wildlife is an important indicator of overall environmental conditions. Therefore, protecting and improving the habitats of these vulnerable species can provide benefits for humans. Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan will serve an important role in guiding resource agencies, institutions and organizations in managing and protecting the diversity of the Commonwealth's fauna."

-Dr. Douglas Austen, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

"These efforts surely will become milestones in Pennsylvania's wildlife conservation timeline. They are historic and far-reaching, and represent our greatest opportunity yet to shape the future of fish and wildlife management and expand coverage to more species than ever before."

-Peter S. Duncan, Pennsylvania Game Commission retired Executive Director

## 3. State Snapshot

Pennsylvania straddles many ecological systems and exhibits a diversity of physiographic provinces, making the state home to many species from northern and southern climates, lowlands and uplands, to grasslands and forests. From east to west, Pennsylvania's ecosystems include: an estuary on the Delaware River, woodlots and wide agricultural valleys in the southeast, deciduous forests from the central ridges to the extensive mixed forest of the Allegheny high plateau, and glaciated woodlands and wetlands, and finally Lake

Erie in the northwest. Predominant are expansive hardwood forests, covering more than 62 percent of the landscape and hosting world-renowned timber and wildlife values. These forests provide critical wildlife habitat for abundant white-tailed deer and a dazzling array of neotropical migratory songbirds.

The Commonwealth is part of six major river basins: Ohio, Lake Erie, Susquehanna, Potomac, Genesee, and Delaware River drainages, and contains numerous wetlands, nearly 4,000 lakes and more than 83,000 miles of waterways, ranging from high-gradient coldwater streams to large warmwater rivers. These waters support a high diversity of fish, freshwater mussels and other aquatic life, dependent upon Pennsylvania's management and protection efforts. One example,



photo-Andy Shiels, PFBC (Wood turtle)

the Chesapeake logperch in the lower Susquehanna River, represents an estimated 40 percent of the species' global population.

Sitting at this strategic ecological crossroads means that Pennsylvania plays an important role in conserving many species and habitats, resident and migrant, common and rare. For this reason, the strategies and priorities identified in Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan incorporate the needs of Pennsylvania Responsibility Concern species and their associated habitats.



photo-Joe Kosack, PGC (Yellow warbler)

#### 4. Planning Approach

Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan encompasses five guiding principles:

- **Conserve Species at Risk.** Species exhibiting warning signs today must be conserved before they become imperiled at the regional, national or global level.
- **Keep Common Species Common.** Native wildlife species must be retained in healthy numbers throughout their natural ranges to maintain their role in ecological processes.
- **Recognize the Unique Role of Pennsylvania.** Strategies and priorities incorporate the needs of species and their associated habitats for which Pennsylvania holds particular responsibility.
- **Foster Voluntary Partnerships for Species, Habitats and People.** The resources of public and private organizations throughout the Commonwealth must be aware of this effort – common contribution to common values.
- **Develop a Comprehensive Strategy.** The State Wildlife Action Plan strategies and priorities are presented at the species, habitat, and species-suite levels, so the Plan's diverse stakeholders can find meaningful recommendations, regardless of their scale and scope of interest.

#### 5. Wildlife Highlights

Wildlife	Total Species	Greatest Conservation Needs*
Mussels	65	41
Snails	>170	52
Crayfish	13	4
Insects	>10,120	312
Fish	194	69
Amphibians	36	15
Reptiles	37	22
Birds	394	44
Mammals	73	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>&gt;11,102</b>	<b>572</b>

\* Species of concern excludes 'maintenance' species

#### 6. Primary Challenges for Conserving Wildlife in Pennsylvania.

**A. HABITAT:** Factors affecting habitat are critical to fish and wildlife in Pennsylvania. Among the features to be addressed are: maintaining and improving existing habitat quality by minimizing habitat fragmentation and loss of wetlands, and improving forest regeneration. These factors also play a significant role in water issues.

**B. WATER:** Protecting surface water and groundwater, instream flows, and water quality is an important aspect of Pennsylvania's plan. Increasing urban and industrial uses places demands upon water sources caused by human population and habitat degradation.

**C. INFORMATION:** Basic gaps in data need to be addressed. These include population size and distribution, factors affecting habitat quality, and species management. Long-term continuous monitoring and data analysis are needed to ensure efficient use of funds.

**D. FUNDING:** Develop stable funding sources to address issues associated with species of greatest conserva-

tion need. The dynamic landscape and complexity of problems require a long-term and sustained initiative to protect and recover species of greatest conservation need. Stable funding will be critical for maintaining the successes achieved thus far.

#### 7. Engaging the Public in Development of the Plan.

Pennsylvania developed the State Wildlife Action Plan through extensive public input. The major components of input took the following forms:

1. A facilitated meeting, hosted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), with key conservation partners from across Pennsylvania working together to identify the overall vision, issues, and goals of the State Wildlife Action Plan. These partners have continually provided comments and suggestions for strategic and operational objectives designed to achieve the partners' vision for comprehensive wildlife conservation in the Commonwealth.
2. Scientific committees of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey selected and prioritized lists of species of concern and drafted natural history accounts.
3. Collaboration with the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership's (PBP) stakeholder and public input process to assist in developing a comprehensive state-wide Pennsylvania Biodiversity Conservation Plan, including: a) 500 surveys distributed for the public to complete at conferences and meetings attended by PBP, and b) a series of facilitated focus groups designed to gather critical information and input from a broad range of stakeholders.
4. Survey of public input conducted in May-June 1996, with more than 1,000 persons participating.



illustration-Ted Walke, PFBC (Eastern sand darter)

5. Assorted facilitated meetings, including an "All-Bird Workshop" in November 2004.

## 8. Recommended Actions to Conserve Your State's Wildlife

Habitats	Wildlife	Issue	Action
<b>Wetlands</b> Ownership: Combination of private & public lands	Wood turtle, Jefferson salamander	Habitat loss, road mortality, degraded habitats including polluted waters, collection for pet trade.	Protect wetlands and vernal pools by requiring buffers and implementing management activities, developing conservation easements.
<b>Rivers and Streams</b> Ownership: Combination of private & public lands	Eastern sand darter, spotted darter and 11 other darter species in this drainage (French Creek)	Siltation from non-point sources, biotic interactions with invasive species (round goby in Lake Erie drainage)	Riparian habitat protection through conservation easements (e.g., Landowner Incentive Program) and other management activities. Conduct surveys to evaluate populations and determine if additional conservation measures are needed.
<b>Northern Hardwoods Forest</b> Ownership Public: 25% Private: 75%	Cerulean warbler, wood thrush, many forest birds	Forest health, lack of regeneration	Private Landowner Assistance Program outreach and other forms of landowner outreach to priority habitats and species occurrences, funded with LIP and SWG; deer management designed to sustain deer populations that don't impede healthy forest regeneration; acid rain mitigation.
<b>Grasslands</b> Public: 10% Private: 90%	Henslow's sparrow, short-eared owl, upland sandpiper	Loss of habitat, management practices	CREP – Set-aside of marginal farm fields for grassland management; Private Landowner Assistance Program outreach and other forms of landowner outreach to priority habitats and species occurrences, funded with LIP and SWG; Grassland mine reclamation initiative - grassland reclamation of abandoned and new strip mines at sites selected for grassland birds, including Henslow's sparrow.

## 9. State Contacts

### Dan Brauning

Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator  
 Pennsylvania Game Commission  
 Dbrauning@state.pa.us  
 570.547.6938  
 www.pgc.state.pa.us

### David Day

Conservation Coordinator  
 Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission  
 1601 Elmerton Ave  
 Harrisburg, PA 17110  
 davday@state.pa.us  
 717.346.8137  
 www.fish.state.pa.us



photo-PFBC (Jefferson salamander)

