

Wildlines

New Hampshire Fish and Game's quarterly newsletter of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program



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State Wildlife Plan Gets Under Way

Over the past year, the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program has worked together with the conservation community to make great strides toward creating New Hampshire's first Comprehensive Wildlife Plan.

Writing the plan, mandated and funded by the federal government, is a three-year effort that will result in a strategic blueprint for restoring endangered and threatened wildlife and their habitats while conserving those that still have a stronghold in the state.

The first step has been amassing all known wildlife information from many locations and putting it all in one place—a central database at the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau in Concord. This effort has involved some treasure hunting for study results from years past.

"Some of it is sitting in boxes, some is at different agencies and organizations around the state, some is in professors' file cabinets at universities," said Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Coordinator John Kanter. "A lot of

this information from past studies is now being gathered into the database where it can be easily displayed and analyzed. We're very encouraged by the amount of information we've been able to put into the system," he said.

Much of the groundwork for the Conservation Wildlife Plan was already in place through the Living Legacy Project, formerly called the Ecological Reserve Project. This effort had prioritized the state's wildlife and habitats to show those most in need of protection. "We've been building off that effort," Kanter said.

Kanter said one of the most significant results of the Comprehensive Wildlife Plan effort is that because of more sophisticated mapping techniques, data on the occurrence of a certain species in a given area can now be represented by more than a single point on a map. Maps can now show an area of suitable habitat in a location

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Getting Back to Nature on the Pine Barrens

Controlled burn staged to improve Karner blue habitat

More than 20 acres of Karner blue butterfly habitat in Concord was burned in October to create better conditions for the endangered Karner and other rare butterflies and moths.

Controlled burns carried out over two days scorched 14 acres on the easement next to the Concord Airport and another 6½ acres of airport land that historically was home to Karners. These areas are of a rare habitat type called pine barrens, which consist of sandy soils supporting scrub oak, pitch pine and wild lupine, which the Karner larvae use exclusively for food.

Historically, natural fires were a part of a regular cleaning-out process on the pine barrens, clearing the area to let in sunlight, getting rid of pine needles and other ground litter, and changing the chemical makeup of the soil.

"We're trying to reestablish the natural cycle," said Celine Goulet, the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife



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The controlled burn was conducted by a team of workers from Fish and Game, USFWS, N.H. National Guard, which operates a neighboring facility, the Department of Resources and Economic Development and the New Boston Air Station.

biological aide implementing habitat restoration. "Historically, the pine barrens would burn every 10 to 15 years on its own."

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For the past few years, mowers and bulldozers have been used to simulate fire at and near the Concord Airport, but there's nothing like the real thing, according to Michael Amaral, an endangered wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

"Fire is better than mechanical mowing or scarifying because fire changes everything," he said. "A good hot fire

burns all of the plant material down to the mineral soil. It removes all that competition. It changes the pH, it fertilizes the soil, it just sets the stage for plants and insects that might otherwise not be able to compete."

In addition to Fish and Game and USFWS biologists, the burn team consisted of people from the N.H. National Guard, which operates a neighboring facility, the Department of Resources and Economic



The burn of over 20 acres near the Concord Airport (above) will benefit many species including scrub oak, wild lupine and pitch pine (top right).

Development (DRED) and the New Boston Air Station.

The team followed a strict safety protocol overseen by Bryan Nowell, a regional forest ranger with DRED who coordinated the burn.

Nowell said every burn requires a detailed burn plan that takes into account the weather conditions, dryness of the area, calculations of acceptable rate of speed for

members of the fire team continually sprayed the ground around the fire to keep it under control. Tanker trucks extinguished the flames and soaked the ground afterward to ensure the fire was out. The area was inspected in the following days to make sure no "hotspots" smoldered.

Another controlled burn is planned for the spring that will improve another five acres of Karner blue habitat. 🐦

the fire and acceptable flame lengths, among other measurements. During the burn, these measurements are monitored closely. "If the fire suddenly is exceeding the paramaters, it's extinguished," Nowell said.

Abutting land-owners, fire towers and dispatchers were notified to make sure everyone knew where the smoke they saw was coming from.

Firebreaks created by heavy equipment were used to confine the burn to the desired areas, and

We're Grateful for Your Generous Support!

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program is pleased to acknowledge the donors below for their generous support of our work. This list includes gifts to the 2003 Annual Fund Campaign that arrived after the close of the campaign as well as other contributions we received since the summer issue of *Wildlines*. Again, thank you!

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Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program Welcomes New Staff Members

Michael Marchand and Kim Tuttle have joined the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program to work primarily with wetlands species and habitat.

Marchand is a wetlands biologist hired last summer to develop and coordinate research projects, among other responsibilities. Some of the projects he's involved with include the Blandings turtle study now wrapping up and studies of saltmarsh birds and vernal pools.

Marchand is also in charge of reviewing wetland permits to determine what impact a proposed development project may have on rare species and to help suggest ways to mitigate potential impacts.

Another part of his job is working with other biologists on the state's Comprehensive Wildlife Plan being written as a framework for all wildlife conservation efforts in New Hampshire. Marchand's role is to scour databases to make sure all known records on rare species get into the central database being created.

Before joining the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, Marchand worked as a research technician at UNH, where he worked with Dr. John Litvaitis on an extensive study of the New England cottontail.

Marchand earned a masters degree from UNH, where the main focus of his study was on how painted turtles are affected by development and fragmentation. He earned a bachelor's in wildlife and fisheries from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Joining the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program was a natural choice for Marchand.

"I've always been concerned about the impacts of development on wildlife species," he said. "New Hampshire has a good opportunity to conserve its rare species, native species and wetlands habitat, because there's still some very nice habitat here, whereas other states have lost

much of their wetlands."

Now living in Chichester, Marchand enjoys hiking and canoeing.

Kim Tuttle is a wetlands technician who has worked for Fish and Game since 1997 first as a fisheries bio aide, then as a wildlife and fisheries technician in Keene. Before coming to Fish and Game, she worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a seasonal technician in the Plymouth / Twin Mountain region.

In her new role with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, Tuttle spends much of her time out in the field conducting research.

"I'm excited about working with new wildlife species I haven't worked with before," Tuttle said, adding that she's especially enjoying working on turtle research.

Some of the other projects she's involved with are a vegetation inventory of



Nongame Program staff members – Back row L to R: Steve Fuller, Kim Tuttle, Mike Marchand, Jim Oehler, Dan Hayward; Front row: Celine Goulet, Alina Pyzikiewicz, John Kanter, Carla Dudley; Not pictured: Jillian Kelly, Allison Briggaman.

the Karner blue butterfly easement property in Concord, an estuarine bird survey being conducted with the N.H. Estuaries Program and data gathering for the state's Wildlife Conservation Plan.



A Laconia native, Tuttle earned a degree in wildlife management from UNH. When not hiking around New Hampshire conducting research, she enjoys hiking around New Hampshire just for the fun of it. 🦋

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where a species is known to occur, which helps land planners know more precisely what areas should be protected. For example, rather than showing a single point that represents a bald-eagle nest tree, we can use what we know about bald-eagle habitat to show what specific areas in a town are prime eagle habitat.

In addition to gathering data, the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program is contracting with its conservation partners to conduct research to start filling in some of the gaps in information about species and habitats at risk. The University of New Hampshire, for example, is doing research on amphibians that depend on vernal pools and birds that depend on saltmarsh habitats.

Many other agencies and organizations are involved in taking these first steps toward the Comprehensive Wildlife Plan. The Audubon Society of New Hampshire has been collecting data and conducting literature reviews for 20 of the highest priority bird species that will be covered in the plan. The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau is providing data quality control and analysis. The Bureau is also integrating data on natural plant community systems with data on habitat classifications.

The Nongame Program will host a wildlife summit with these partners and many more this winter. Tentatively planned

for January, the summit will provide a forum for sharing ideas and expertise.

“It’ll be a full day of getting input to identify barriers and strategies for statewide wildlife conservation,” said Judy Silverberg, wildlife education program supervisor for Fish and Game and a member of the Comprehensive Wildlife Plan’s outreach committee.

Gathering and entering existing information into the database should be completed by next spring. The next step will be to begin analyzing the data to get a clearer picture of what species and habitats are most in need of protection. Research projects will be developed and carried out to fill in gaps in our knowledge.

With such a comprehensive project underway, it’s a truly exciting time for all who care about conserving our state’s natural resources. It’s a good time to thank all the donors who have helped build the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program over the years and who have made such a huge effort possible.

“The Comprehensive Wildlife Plan really represents a culmination of donors’ support for endangered and nongame



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Under the Comprehensive Wildlife Plan UNH conducts research on amphibians that depend on vernal pools, like the wood frog.

wildlife. By keeping the program alive and providing the constant source of matching funds and support, they have allowed us to reach this level,” Kanter said. 🐸

WINTER Wildlife Almanac

JANUARY

- Voles travel under the snow. Keep an eye out for their tunnels under bird feeders.
- Loons have changed to winter plumage: slate gray above and white below with a slate bill. They winter along the coast, where they can find open water to fish.

FEBRUARY

- White-breasted nuthatch pairs reestablish closeness. Watch and listen for them maintaining visual and voice contact.
- Redback salamanders, the most common of New England salamanders, may become active during warm spells. They spend most of the winter hibernating underground.

MARCH

- Bald eagles start incubating their eggs.
- Chipmunks emerge from their winter quarters. Listen for their calls in wooded areas.

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