

Wildlines

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

Karner Blues Gain Ground

Karner blue butterflies continued their comeback in Concord, with a strong breeding season that yielded 1,352 Karners released in the captive breeding program, a wonderfully high number considering there were fewer than 50 Karners left in the population just a few years ago.

On another high note, biologists captured 194 wild Karners in order to mark and release them in an effort to track how much of the available habitat they're actually using. The existence of wild Karners, as opposed to those raised in captivity and protected from the elements, is a good indicator of the success of the recovery project.

Also, for the first time, biologists conducted a "mark recapture" program with another rare butterfly, the frosted elfin. In a mark recapture program, butterflies are captured, marked, released and recaptured later in order to see how widely disbursed they are.

"I think this has been one of our most successful

KARNER BLUES continued on page 6

Farewell, Alina!

One of the reasons the Karner blue butterfly recovery project is doing so well is the hard work of biological technician Alina Pyzikiewicz, who until recently managed the Karner blue captive-rearing lab in Concord. After four years with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, Pyzikiewicz has left to move to Albany, N.Y., where, incidentally, she'll be near the other Karner blue butterfly population remaining in the Northeast.

Thank you, Alina, for a job well done!



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Endangered Piping Plovers

Feral Cats and Storms Take Their Toll



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An orphaned pair of piping plover chicks, the only ones to survive this year, spent many weeks being raised by wildlife rehabilitators over the summer before flying south in late August.

A particularly strong Nor'easter in late May and feral cats combined to create very challenging breeding conditions for plovers, which are state endangered and federally threatened. Three pairs of plovers arrived in early spring to breed, one pair nested in the sand dunes at Hampton Beach State Park and the other two in the dunes of Seabrook Town Beach. All three original nests were washed away by high tides brought on by the May storm, as were nests all along the Northeastern coast.

The New Hampshire plovers re-nested, but they faced many more challenges. Although the nests were monitored during the day and roped off to keep people at a safe distance, the plovers were still vulnerable to feral cats that roam throughout the area.

"We trapped quite a few feral cats, but they are still a

big problem for New Hampshire's endangered piping plovers," said Brendan Clifford, who monitored plovers over the summer for the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. All of the feral cats that were trapped were identified as being part of the SAFER (Seacoast Area Feline Education and Rescue) program by a notch in their ear. In each case, a SAFER representative removed the cat from the trap and transported it out of Hampton Beach State Park to a holding facility.

Feral cats are believed to have killed the parents of the two orphaned chicks at Hampton Beach State Park. Clifford said the Hampton nest had four eggs in it when the parents disappeared. The adult male was killed first, then the female. Clifford said when he arrived at the nest on the morning of July 14, both parents were gone and one egg had hatched.

"The chick was covered in ants. It was really in distress," Clifford said. "I found the adult female hiding in some grass about 20 feet from the nest and surrounded by cat tracks in the sand." She had been badly

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OSPREY

Successful Year for Ospreys

Another Great Season for State-Threatened Birds

It was another record-breaking year for osprey breeding success in New Hampshire. A quick comparison to last year's breeding numbers — which were very high themselves — shows what a great year 2005 was for this state-threatened bird. Last year, there were 34 active nests; this year, there were 43. Last year, ospreys fledged 53 young; this year, they fledged 62.


These are the highest breeding numbers the state has seen since before the pesticide DDT devastated the osprey population, prompting a recovery program that began in the early 1980s.

This year New Hampshire's ospreys faced some cold, wet conditions in June that likely decreased their nesting success. With more ospreys nesting in the state, however, productivity was high despite the challenging weather.

Much of this year's increase can be linked to a five-year partnership called Project Osprey, a cooperative effort that ended last year, but will continue to yield dividends into the future. Project Osprey

was a collaboration between the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, Public Service of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Audubon.

As a result of this successful public/private partnership, utility poles topped with nesting platforms were erected all over the state to increase suitable nesting opportunities for ospreys, especially in areas ospreys were not yet using.

Breeding pairs of ospreys are now using four out of the five major watersheds in the state — the Androscoggin River, the Connecticut River, the Great Bay/seacoast area and the Merrimack River. 

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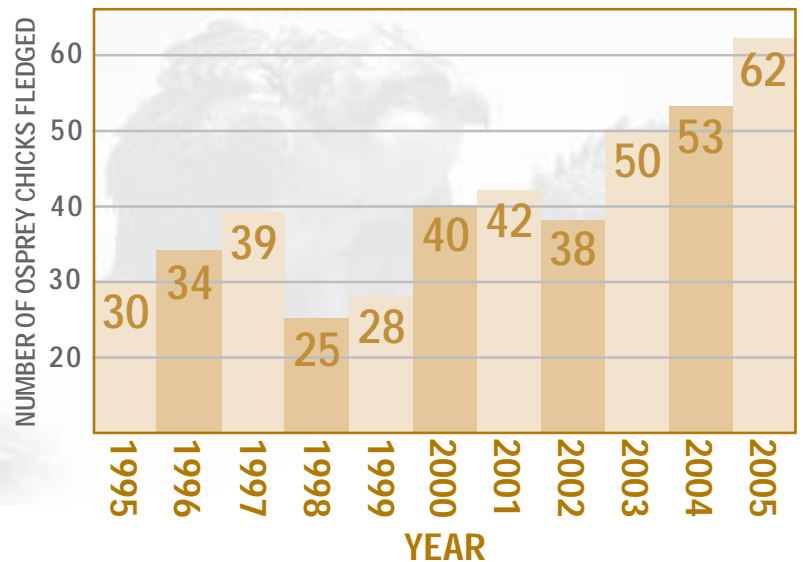


Biologists check osprey nesting platforms, which are critical for attracting osprey into new areas to spread out their distribution.

It was another record-breaking year for osprey breeding success in New Hampshire.



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Bald Eagle Update

Second Strong Year of Breeding Success

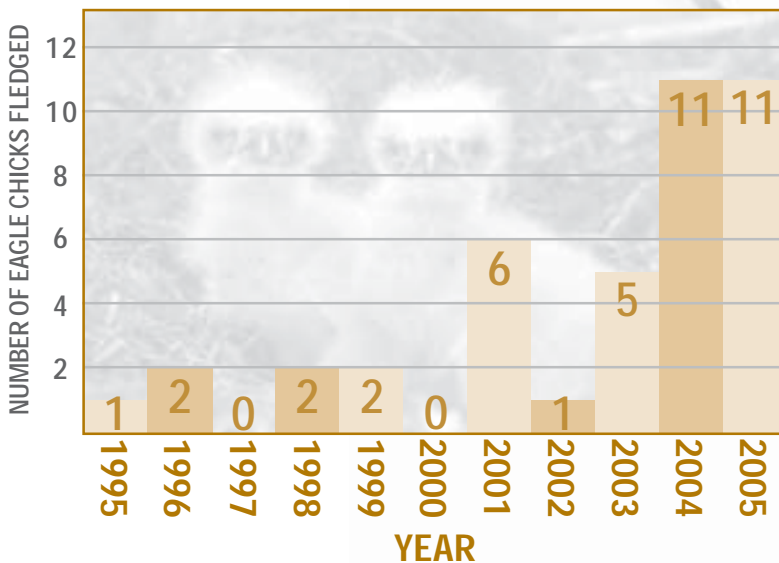
Bald eagles fledged 11 young in New Hampshire this year, repeating last year's breeding performance, which was the best on record since the bald eagle recovery project began in the mid-1980s.

Ten territorial pairs lived in New Hampshire during the spring breeding season, and nine of them were observed nesting. Seven of those nests produced eggs, with just one of those failing to yield fledglings. The other six nests were successful, tying last year's record-breaking success rate.

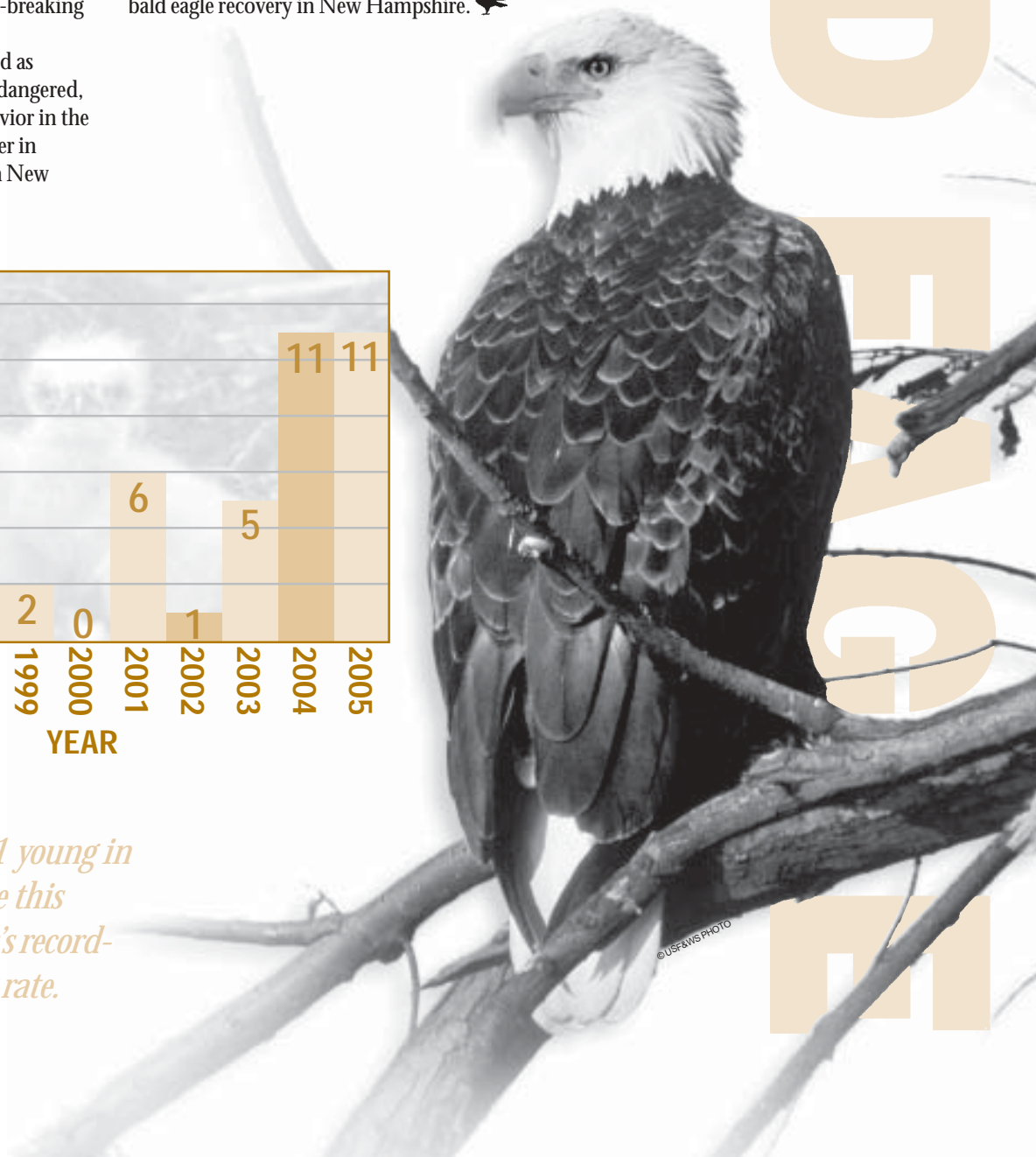
Bald eagles, which are listed as federally threatened and state endangered, nested or showed territorial behavior in the following areas: Connecticut River in Plainfield, Merrymeeting Lake in New

Durham, Moore's Crossing in Bedford, Nubanusit Lake in Hancock, Pontook Reservoir in Dummer, Squam Lake in Moultonboro, Vernon Dam in Hinsdale, and three pairs nested at Umbagog Lake in Errol.

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program continues to work together with New Hampshire Audubon, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and many volunteers to monitor and manage bald eagle recovery in New Hampshire. 🦅



Bald eagles fledged 11 young in New Hampshire this year...tying last year's record-breaking success rate.



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Terns Fare Well

Despite Challenging Weather

Even though spring storms disrupted their nesting activities, the recovered population of common terns on the Isle of Shoals managed to produce nearly the same number of fledglings this year as last.

Approximately 2,500 pairs of state-endangered common terns nested on Seavey Island, and produced just over 1,700 young. These numbers are consistent with productivity totals from the last several years, as the common tern population has maintained full capacity for three consecutive years.

Common terns weren't the only ones to find a haven on Seavey Island. Sixty-seven pairs of federally and state-endangered roseate terns nested as well and fledged 42 chicks. In addition, nine pairs of state-threatened arctic terns fledged six chicks.

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, together with New Hampshire Audubon, began working to re-establish the tern colony on Seavey Island in 1997. Since then, biologists have maintained a human presence on the island throughout the breeding season to keep predatory gulls at bay and monitor and study the birds. This year, project staff included Audubon biologist and project leader Diane DeLuca and Audubon biologist Becky Suomala, who provided support and coordination. Audubon

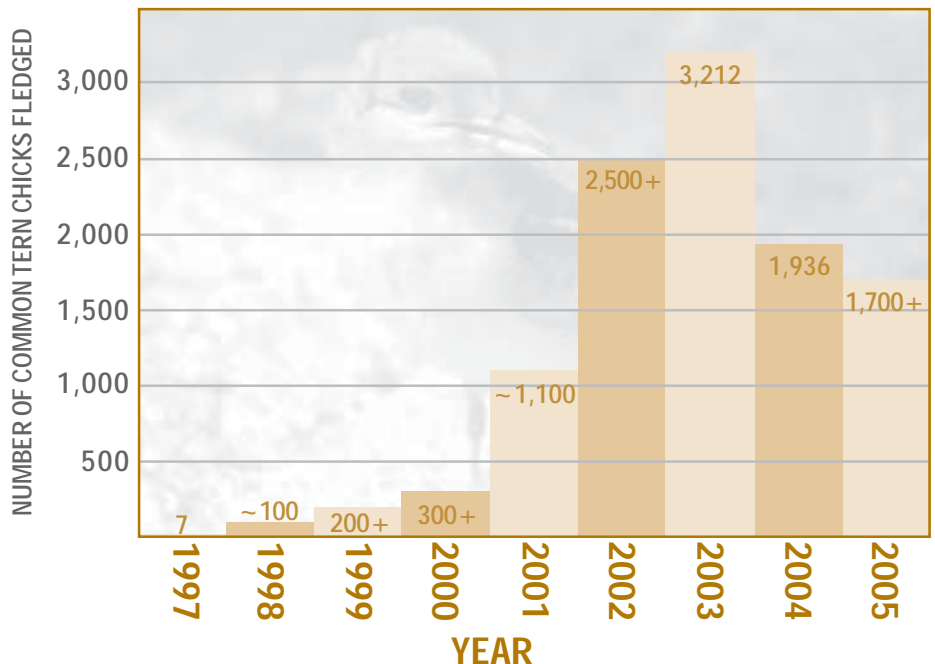
biologists Dan Hayward, Melissa Barney and Miles Waniga lived on the island throughout the breeding season, monitoring the colony and performing gull control.

The breeding season had a rough start this spring, with two Nor'easters churning up 17-foot seas in May, delaying nesting activities. "It was actually the roughest we've ever had out there," said DeLuca. "After the second storm, over 50 percent of the birds disappeared from the island, but returned a few days later." The impact of the nesting delay was felt the whole season, with terns still lingering on the island into September, which is quite late for terns to still be in New Hampshire.

This year, biologists noticed terns having trouble moving through dense grasses growing in the nesting area. The vegetation has advanced to the point of hindering tern reproduction, perhaps because of the increased fertilization from the tern colony or from plentiful rainfall during the last several springs. "It's getting so dense that they can't really move through it," DeLuca said. "We did see some nest abandonment because of the dense grass."

Looking toward the future of the tern project, biologists are considering doing habitat work on the island to control the grass growth and aid tern reproduction. 🐦

The common tern population has maintained full capacity for three consecutive years.



TERNS



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Exceptional Productivity for Peregrine Falcons

Peregrine falcons fared well this year in New Hampshire, occupying 13 territorial sites, a number that is down a bit from last year's 15 sites, but still a strong showing for this state-endangered species.

Eight successful nests yielded 24 young peregrines — an exceptional productivity rate. Five of the nests produced four chicks each, setting a record for the state.

"In all the previous years of recovery, we've never had a single year where we've

had more than three nests produce that many young," said Chris Martin, a senior biologist with New Hampshire Audubon, which monitors and manages peregrines under contract with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program.

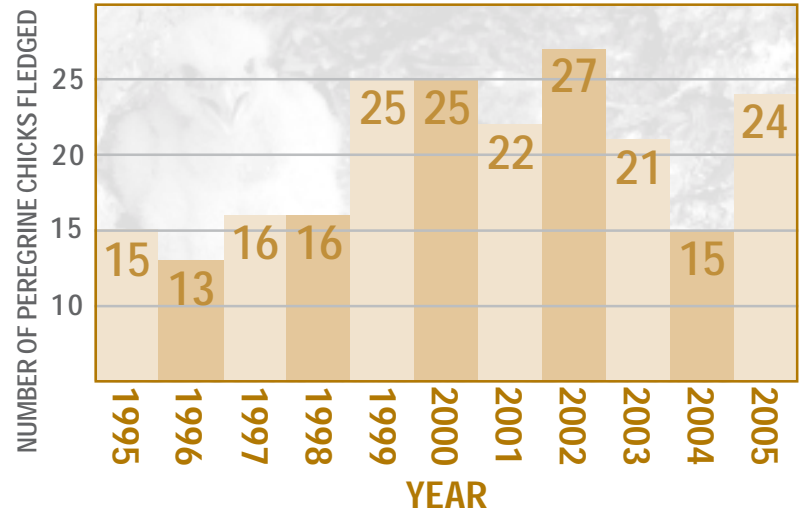
Martin noted that some traditional peregrine nesting sites in New Hampshire showed no sign of peregrine activity this year, which may be just an anomaly, but would be a cause for concern if it continued. "Well have to watch and see," he said.



Eight successful nests yielded 24 young peregrines.



© CHRIS MARTIN PHOTO



PLOVERS continued from page 1

injured and later died." The plover carcass was sent to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison WI for necropsy, or examination.

Two of the other eggs hatched later in the day, while one didn't hatch at all. The three chicks were taken to the Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick, Maine. One died in transport, while the other two survived.

After their time at the center, they were entrusted to a wildlife rehabilitator

who raised them with a minimal amount of human contact in order to keep them as wild as possible under the circumstances.

The two chicks were released in late August in Maine, at a location where wild plovers were migrating. The rehabilitator and biologists hoped the chicks would join the other plovers.

"We were trying to give them the best chance of survival," Clifford said. "We hoped the two raised in captivity would learn from the other plovers." Clifford said besides the successful captive rearing of the two plover chicks, educating the public was a highlight of the season. He visited Winnacunnet High School to talk to students about the piping

plover project, talked to a homeschool group and spoke with many beachgoers at Hampton Beach and Seabrook Beach about protecting the plovers.

Since 1997 when the piping plover protection effort began in New Hampshire, 74 chicks have successfully fledged; overall, the entire Atlantic coast population of piping plovers has continued to increase.

For more information about piping plovers, visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/index.html. For more information about SAFER visit www.safercats.com/index1.html.

Two piping plover chicks, orphaned by the loss of their parents, were successfully raised in captivity and released into the wild at the end of summer.



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KARNER BLUES *continued from page 1*

years all around,” said Celine Goulet, a biological technician with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program.

Karner blue butterflies are quarter-sized insects with blue wings bordered by a band of brown. They are both state and federally endangered. In New Hampshire, they exist only in Concord and use only a certain kind of habitat, called pine barrens. Pine barrens consist of sandy soils, pitch pine, scrub oak and wild blue lupine, as well as other sun-loving plants. Karners lay their eggs only on wild blue lupine leaves, which are eaten by Karner larva. The pine barrens in Concord are located in the Concord Heights area on and near the municipal airport, the National Guard armory and an abutting conservation easement managed for Karner blue restoration. An interpretive kiosk at the end of Chenell Drive on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Conservation Easement in Concord tells the story of the pine barrens, the Karner blues and restoration efforts.

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Guard and other agencies to strengthen the state's last remaining population of Karner blues.

Habitat restoration is a major part of the recovery project, and biologists have been working to create more suitable Karner blue habitat at the Concord site for the past several years. Over the past summer, biologists used brush cutters and tillers to let in more sunlight and disturb the soil. They also cleared a 6-acre site of aspen and birch

First Study – Radio Tracking Eastern Hognose Snakes Proves Successful

by *Craig Kostrzewski,*
Wildlife Biologist,
New Boston Air Force Station

Eastern hognose snakes, a state-threatened species, were first confirmed on the New Boston Air Force Station (NBAFS) in 1997. Between 1997-2003 there were 11 confirmed records of hognose snakes on NBAFS, mostly incidental. In 2004, surveys were conducted by NBAFS Natural Resources staff, who found a total of four adult snakes, one juvenile and six hatchlings.

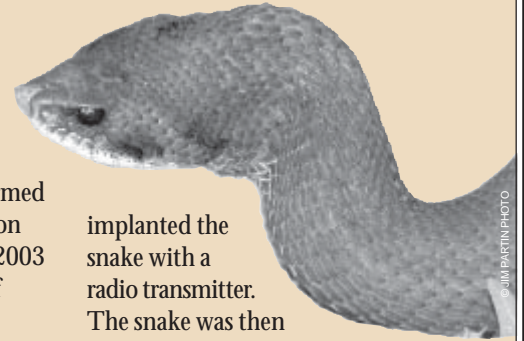
A project was developed to gather data on habitat use, movements, and locations of hibernaculums (wintering areas) so that these areas could be identified and protected. This data also will be used to develop a management plan for the Eastern hognose snake on the Air Force Station.

On May 12, 2005, an adult Eastern hognose snake was captured on the north portion of the base. Dr. Michael Dutton, of the Weare Animal Hospital,

implanted the snake with a radio transmitter. The snake was then released on the base and its movements have been monitored daily using radio telemetry.

On September 12, a second adult Eastern hognose snake was captured and implanted with a radio transmitter. Its movements also will be monitored and documented. Surveys for additional snakes this September resulted in finding many hatchlings on NBAFS, including 15 hatchlings found in one day.

Surveys will continue through September and October and monitoring the two radio transmitter-equipped adults will continue until they go into their hibernaculums. 🐍



JILL MARTIN PHOTO

and applied herbicide to remove woody species that choke out lupine and other plants that are important to the Karner blue and other butterflies. “We’re hopeful that our work at the site will give the pine barrens species a chance to reestablish themselves – plants like wild blue lupine, New Jersey tea, blueberries, sweet ferns and other types of plants,” Goulet said.

Historically, natural fires maintained the pine barrens by getting rid of excess brush, creating sunny clearings where pine barrens plants could flourish. In Concord, mostly mechanical means have been employed to do the same thing, although controlled burns have also been conducted. Another controlled burn is planned for the near future.

Biologists, with the help of area schoolchildren, have also planted hundreds of wild blue lupine and other nectar plants at the recovery site. 🐦



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Biologists mark a Karner blue butterfly before releasing it into the wild. This enables the biologists to determine and monitor the butterfly's distribution.



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Your continued support is helping to not only protect and restore threatened and endangered species, but also to preserve the diversity of wildlife that makes New Hampshire so special. The efforts of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program benefit both residents and visitors alike. Wildlife abounds for bird watchers, hikers, canoeists, kayakers and even those simply driving along New

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It is with our most sincere appreciation that we thank the more than 1,000 donors for their continued support! On behalf of New Hampshire Fish and Game's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program staff, thank you!

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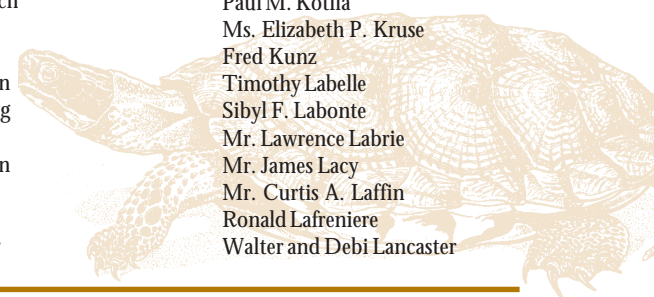
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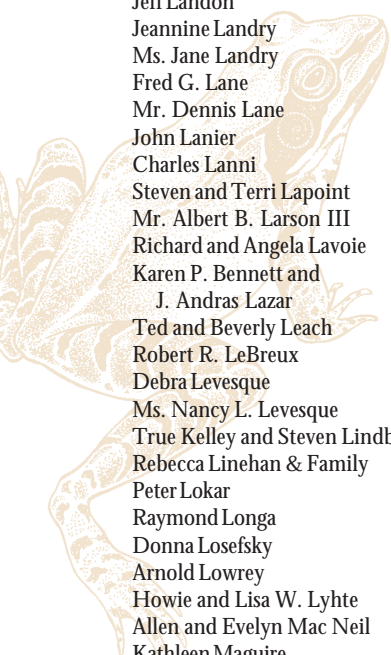
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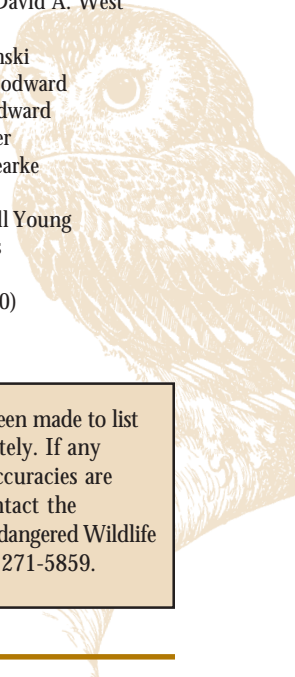
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The time and dedication that volunteers devote to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program are essential to carrying out much of the protection and restoration efforts of the program. This year, 24 volunteers contributed over 125 hours helping with efforts such as raising Karner blue butterflies, restoring pine barrens habitat and monitoring piping plovers. Thank you to all those who contributed their time and efforts! 2005 volunteers included:

Karner Blue Butterfly Restoration

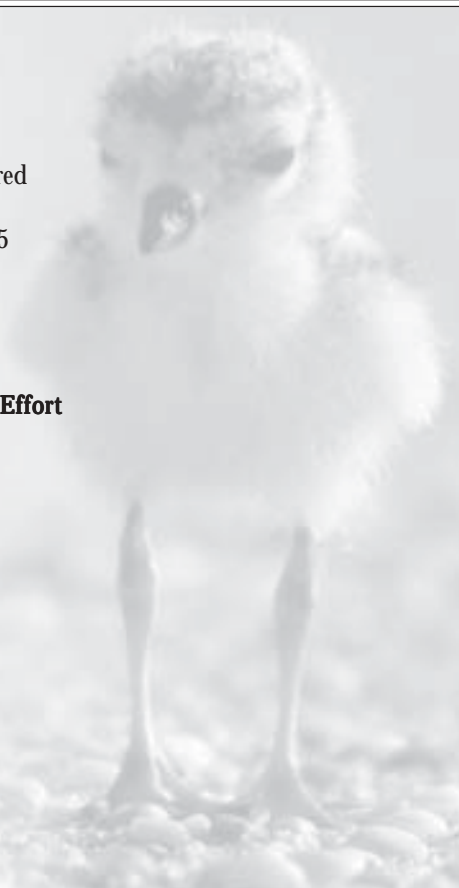
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FALL Wildlife Almanac

OCTOBER

- Blanding's turtles burrow into root tangles in deep pockets of marshes for winter hibernation.
- Monarch butterflies pass overhead on a journey to Mexican mountains.

NOVEMBER

- Little brown, big brown, small-footed, Northern long-eared and Eastern pipistrelle bats settle in for a long winter's rest in abandoned mines.

DECEMBER

- Take a trip to the coast to look for migrating seabirds like common eiders, common loons, buffleheads, grebes and purple sandpipers.

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