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# Wildlines

WINTER 2007

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

## Wildlife Action Plan Update:

Improved habitat maps, review of threatened species, and research underway

The most significant accomplishment since the approval of New Hampshire's Wildlife Action Plan has been the creation of new and improved Wildlife Habitat Maps for the entire state. Early on, some maps were available, but these initial maps simply showed where habitats occurred in the state. Biologists have now completed a complex analysis of habitat conditions throughout the state. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, the analysis considered many factors to determine habitat quality including the presence of rare species, size of habitat areas, next nearest habitat areas, roads density, pollution risk and many others. The new and improved Wildlife Habitat Maps not only show where habitats occur in the state, but identify the highest quality habitats in New Hampshire.

Historically, habitat has been protected piecemeal in New Hampshire. Pieces of land were put into

conservation as landowners were willing. Now, communities have a tool that will allow them to take a more proactive approach towards conservation. Using GIS, they will have the capability to create maps at any scale, allowing them to see how their town fits into the bigger picture – at the landscape level – while still respecting local priorities.



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*Facing serious threats from loss of habitat from development, the Blanding's turtle, not currently listed as endangered or threatened, may be added to the list during the upcoming revision.*

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www.mooseplate.com

## Moose Plate Dollars at Work

Money raised from the sale of "Moose License Plates" helped benefit nongame, threatened and endangered wildlife in New Hampshire in many ways during the past year. Nongame projects made possible thanks to New Hampshire's Conservation License Plate program include:

**Schoolyard habitat project:** Fish and Game's Homes for Wildlife Action Grant Program allows students and educators to undertake projects that enhance habitat for people and wildlife. It is designed to support student environmental action that may be reflected in measurable acres improved or protected for wildlife. In 2006, the following projects were completed:

- St. Anthony's School in Manchester created a bird and pollinator garden in front of the school building as habitat for birds and insects.
- Chester Academy established "The BIG (Butterfly Insect Garden) House" with native New Hampshire and ornamental plants as a habitat area and outdoor lab.
- Epsom Central School added a "Pollinator Habitat" to expand their original habitat area for songbirds and insects.



*MOOSEPLATE continued on page 2*

# Winter Back Yard Birding

Creating a back yard winter bird habitat can be a wonderful way to view wildlife without ever leaving the warmth of your home.

All the different types of feeders and foods available in stores can be confusing, though, and some feeding practices can actually be harmful to wildlife! Following are some tips for how to attract birds to your yard this winter and help keep them healthy:

**SELECTING A FEEDER:** Tube and tray style feeders, hanging or perched on posts, will attract a wide range of wintering birds to your yard. Some birds, such as nuthatches and chickadees, prefer hanging feeders, while others, such as jays, prefer the tray style. Tube feeders with wire mesh are a good deterrent for squirrels that can scare away birds and devour all the seed. Also, scattering some seed under the feeders provides a place to eat for many species, like doves, that will forage off the ground.

**PLACEMENT OF FEEDERS AND FOOD:** Feeders that are placed among shrubs and trees

tend to attract more birds than feeders placed out in the open. These areas offer more protection from the elements and quicker access to hiding places should a predator approach. Of course you'll want to keep feeders close to your home for easier viewing. If there are no shrubs or trees near your home, create shelter for birds by making a brush pile or placing your Christmas tree outside after the holidays.

**WHAT FOODS TO SUPPLY:** Many of New Hampshire's wintering birds prefer sunflower seeds, which are a great food to start with. Adding different kinds of food will attract a variety of bird species. Thistle is the preferred food of goldfinches, and suet (often beef fat with seeds and/or nuts mixed in) is not only a special treat for birds like woodpeckers, but also helps to provide much-needed energy to keep birds warm.

Don't forget the water! Birds need fresh water year-round. Although difficult during winter, providing water can be possible either by refilling your birdbath frequently or purchasing a specialized heater to prevent ice from forming.

**KEEP BIRDS HEALTHY:** Make sure that feeders are clean. Periodically cleaning feeders and baths with a 10% Clorox solution will help prevent bacteria from growing. Also, when dispersing feed directly onto the ground, only put out enough to be entirely consumed within a few hours. Seed and other food that sits on the ground can

*The tufted titmouse is a common winter visitor to backyard bird feeders.*



*MOOSEPLATE continued from page 1*

**Wildlife Journal television:** A segment was produced for Wildlife Journal television to inform the public about New Hampshire's Wildlife Action Plan. The program raises awareness of New Hampshire species and habitats that benefit from the plan and how these wildlife resources add economic value to the state and protect its rural character. A joint production of Fish and Game and New Hampshire Public Television (NHPTV), Wildlife Journal airs on NHPTV on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. For broadcast times and other topics, visit [www.wildlifejournal.tv](http://www.wildlifejournal.tv).

**Salt marsh bird study:** In partnership with the University of New Hampshire, a study is being conducted to learn about the current status and distribution of sharp-tailed sparrows, a species of special concern in the state. UNH faculty and students spent the summer searching for nests and monitoring sharp-tailed sparrows. In addition, an experiment was conducted using artificial nests and eggs to determine predation on sharp-tailed sparrow nests during the breeding season.

To find out more about the moose plate program, go to [www.mooseplate.com](http://www.mooseplate.com).

Learn how to create your own back yard bird habitat using these resources:

N.H. Fish and Game Department  
[www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us)

National Audubon  
[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

National Wildlife Federation  
[www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

New England Wildflower Society  
[www.newfs.org](http://www.newfs.org)

UNH Cooperative Extension  
<http://extension.unh.edu>

not become contaminated from animal droppings.

Once you begin feeding birds during the winter, be consistent. Empty feeders can cause hardship for birds that have become accustomed to visiting them, especially during extremel cold.

**KEEP A BACK YARD BIRD LIST:** Binoculars, a bird identification guide and a notebook are all items that can enhance your winter back yard birding experience. Record things such as the date, species, number of birds, and even the weather.

**PLAN AHEAD FOR SPRING GARDENING:** Take a look around your yard or garden and keep in mind the four main requirements of all wildlife: food, water, shelter and space. Does your back yard bird habitat contain all of these elements? Perhaps you can choose some native plants to add that will enhance your back yard bird habitat.

## Mission Accomplished!

In the fall of 2006, the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program conducted its first-ever special fall appeal. We asked for your help to provide funding to purchase and install new and improved gates at Mascot Mine in Gorham, N.H. It is with the greatest gratitude that I am happy to announce that the work has now been completed and, thanks to all of your help, New Hampshire's largest and most significant winter bat hibernaculum is now protected! *Thank you!*

# New Conservation Area Will Benefit Species of Concern

In February 2006, Weare residents voted in favor of preserving over 600 acres of open space in the town. The land, which was valued at over \$2 million, could have been developed with 100 new residential houses. Instead, landowner Frank Ferrante gave the town the opportunity to purchase the land first.

The Weare Conservation Commission took charge and, with the support of residents and many conservation organizations including the Piscataquog Watershed Association, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and the N.H. Fish and Game Department, the town was able to purchase the land. Conservation easements will further protect the land so that it can never be developed.

The property, which has been designated as the "Charles and Ethyl Eastman Conservation Area," is located in the north-

ern part of Weare, between Route 114 and Hatfield Road. It connects to the John Stark Regional High School property, as well as approximately 12,000 acres of land that is already protected.

Biologists Jim Oehler and Steve Fuller from N.H. Fish and Game walked the property to determine its value for wildlife. During their visit, they observed a diversity of habitat types that may support a wide range of wildlife, including many species that are identified as being of special concern in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

Blanding's turtles, spotted turtles, American black ducks and American woodcock may occur in the complex of marshes and shrub swamps that exist on the property. In addition, a 10- to 15-acre field could possibly provide habitat for New England cottontail, a species that has declined significantly throughout the state.

During their visit, Oehler and Fuller observed tracks from bobcat, another species of concern in the state, according to the Wildlife Action Plan. "Roads are the biggest risk factor for bobcats," said Oehler. "Maintaining large blocks of forest is the primary strategy for maintaining healthy populations of




*Snowshoe hare*

© COREL PHOTO

bobcats in New Hampshire." Another good sign: the biologists observed tracks and pellets from snowshoe hare, which are a major food source for bobcat.

In addition to its large size and proximity to other protected lands, the Eastman Conservation Area is one of the few remaining places in New Hampshire where black gum swamps still exist. According to the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau, black gum swamps are very rare in the state and vulnerable to extinction. "This feature alone makes the property highly valued for conservation," said Oehler.

Now that the land has been purchased by the town, conservation easements are being put in place which will ensure the conservation of the property's ecological resources and maintain the right of public pedestrian access. The Weare Conservation Commission will manage the new conservation area, with guidance and support from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. 



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## Canada lynx

*(Lynx canadensis)*

### *Fast Facts:* Canada Lynx

**Status:** Endangered in New Hampshire, threatened throughout the U.S.

**Description:** Between 15-30 pounds and approximately three feet long, lynx are large cats distinguished by tufts on their ears, short tails and large paws that help them navigate through deep snow.

**Habitat:** Early successional areas with low shrubs and brush in far northern forests. Dens in sheltered places such as in rocky areas or under downed trees.

**Range:** Varies significantly, from six to nearly 200 square miles.

**Diet:** Main food source is snowshoe hare.

**Threats:** N.H. Wildlife Action Plan cites loss of habitat as the primary threat for lynx. Decreased clear cutting in the northern forests has reduced the amount of early successional habitat, which is essential for snowshoe hare, the lynx's primary food source.

**Life span:** In the wild, about 15 years. Those in captivity can live over 25 years.

**Fun fact:** Lynx populations rise and fall with snowshoe hare cycles, which peak approximately once every 10 years. Although evidence of lynx in New Hampshire is extremely rare, lynx tracks were documented in January 2006 in the town of Jefferson.

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“What’s exciting is that the data and the maps are usable by towns, land trusts, and others to see what high quality habitats exist in their community and use it in their planning,” said Emily Brunkhurst, a biologist with the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program at Fish and Game, who is coordinating New Hampshire’s Wildlife Action Plan efforts. The plan identifies 123 species and 27 habitats in greatest need of conservation in the state, and outlines over 70 specific conservation strategies. “Conservation planners will now be able to identify the habitats where there will be the biggest impacts for protecting wildlife” Brunkhurst said.

Brunkhurst will work with conservation partners such as UNH Cooperative extension to host workshops throughout the state on how to use the new maps and data in conservation planning. Currently, the maps and data are available on CD for land use planners. To request a copy, contact the Wildlife Division at Fish and Game at (603) 271-2461 or wilddiv@wildlife.state.nh.us.

Work is currently underway to make the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan data and maps available to the public on the NH GRANIT Datamapper website. Visitors to the GRANIT website will be able to view the data and maps using GRANIT’s

online datamapper program and will not be required to have GIS technologies. To visit GRANIT go to: <http://mapper.granit.unh.edu/viewer.htm>.

### THREATENED SPECIES REVIEW

According to Brunkhurst, another the high priority of the Wildlife Action Plan is to revise New Hampshire’s threatened and endangered species list. The current list was last revised in 2000, when hognose snakes and marbled salamanders were added, along with other species. Working together with conservation partners such as N.H. Audubon, a comprehensive assessment has been completed in preparation for revising the list of state-protected species. This included considering threats to the species’ existence and how the New Hampshire population fit into the whole range that the species occupies. The next step is to invite experts to review the assessments.

Some species that are currently listed have seen such a great recovery that their status may be downgraded. For example, peregrine falcons are currently listed as endangered in New Hampshire. However, thanks in large part to management efforts, peregrine numbers have increased in the state and therefore their status could be downgraded to threatened. Despite the successful

recovery of some species, others, like the New England cottontail and Blanding’s turtle, not currently listed as endangered or threatened, are facing serious threats from loss of habitat from development and may be added to the list during the upcoming revision.

### RARE FISH SURVEYED

Last summer, research projects to implement New Hampshire’s Wildlife Action Plan began as well. “When we started working on the Wildlife Action Plan, there were a number of fish species whose current status in New Hampshire was virtually unknown,” said fisheries biologist Matt Carpenter. Carpenter and other biologists from New Hampshire Fish and Game conducted surveys for five species of fish: American brook lamprey, bridle shiner, banded sunfish, redbfin pickerel and swamp darter. The biologists were then able to use fish survey data collected in the 1930s and 1980s as a reference to compare with the current distribution of these species of concern. The surveys showed that bridled shiners appear to be missing from some sites, but more intense surveys need to be done to follow up.

The complete New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan and information about the Wildlife Habitat Maps, is available at [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us).



## WINTER Wildlife Almanac

### JANUARY

- Look high and low for deer mice. Active year-round, they may nest in stone walls or under downed logs, but they also climb trees, where they store food sometimes in abandoned birds nests.

### FEBRUARY

- Flying squirrels begin mating. These nocturnal acrobats are active throughout the year.

### MARCH

- Barred owls, the most common owl in New Hampshire, nest in tree cavities. Pairs tend to nest in the same area each year. Some pairs have even been documented nesting in the same location for over 25 years! Listen for their distinctive “who-cooks-for-you” call.

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