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Wildlines

WINTER 2011

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

State Wildlife Grants

Ten years of success – and an uncertain future

By John Kanter, Nongame Program Coordinator

The N.H. Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program is celebrating an anniversary that you might not have heard about – it's the 10th year that the State Wildlife Grants program has been distributing federal money to states for wildlife conservation. With the help of these funds, in just a decade, we've gone from a one-person program to a full-fledged conservation operation, leading the way with a statewide coalition of partners dedicated to improving wildlife and habitat.

The State Wildlife Grants program emerged from the 6,000-organization national "Teaming With Wildlife" coalition's campaign to secure long-term, stable funding for nongame wildlife. Since its inception in

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N.H. Wildlife Action Plan Update

500 Acres Protected at Clay Pond Headwaters in Hooksett

More than 500 acres of high-value wildlife habitat have been protected near the Hooksett/Candia town line. The Clay Pond headwaters project area borders both Bear Brook State Park and land managed for a public drinking water supply. In combination, these protected areas and surrounding privately owned lands total more than 18,000 acres of unfragmented natural habitat.

The Hooksett Conservation Commission and the Bear-Paw Regional Greenways joined forces to permanently protect the Clay Pond headwaters area. They recognized the importance of this area not only because of its size, but also because the N.H. Wildlife Action Plan identifies it as some of the highest-ranked (most valuable) wildlife habitat in the state. Vernal pools, great blue heron rookeries, over 130 acres of wetlands, and documented occurrences of state-endangered Blanding's turtles made this area especially important to protect.

To permanently protect the Clay Pond head-

waters area cost over a million dollars. The Hooksett Conservation Committee and the Bear-Paw Regional Greenways were able to acquire funding through various grants, including the Land and Community Heritage Investment Project, the Open Space Institute's Saving New England's Wildlife program, and the Department of Environmental Services' Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund, all of which use the Wildlife Action Plan to prioritize which conservation projects to fund.

One of these funding sources, the N.H. Department of Environmental Service's Aquatic Resources Mitigation (ARM) Fund, was created as a payment option for those who are required to mitigate for impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources. (When significant wetland resources are impacted, mitigation is required under state wetland rules.) The ARM fund seeks no net loss of aquatic resource acreage; if mitigation cannot be done associated with a development site, the payment option provides funding to protect and restore other important wetland resources in the watershed.

A Site Selection Committee, including one representative from N.H. Fish and Game, works together to evaluate project proposals for ARM funding. "Proposals are evaluated and ranked according to a standardized set of criteria. Those projects that propose to benefit an

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Moose Plate Dollars at Work

Funding from the N.H. Conservation License Plate Program (Moose Plate) supports the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program in carrying out its mission as the steward for New Hampshire's nongame wildlife – animals that are not hunted, fished, or trapped.

For the 2010 fiscal year, the N.H. Fish and Game Department received over \$239,000 from the sale of N.H. Moose Plates. This funding provides critical “match” funding that allows the Nongame Program to qualify for federal State Wildlife Grants. So each time you buy, or renew, your N.H. Moose Plate, your money is matched,

making it go further in helping to conserve New Hampshire's wildlife. Thank you for your continued support of the N.H. Conservation License Plate

Program! For more information, visit www.mooseplate.com.

During the 2010 fiscal year, Moose Plate dollars helped to support:

- Bat surveys, including the discovery of a new small-footed bat colony in Hinsdale.
- Plans to determine the feasibility of trans-locating state-endangered New England cottontails from Maine to N.H. and a captive-rearing program to supplement the wild population.

- The volunteer-based N.H. Dragonfly Survey, which completed its third year with record success, bringing the total number of species-occurrence records to over 3,000 for the state.
- Publication of the Nongame Program newsletter, *Wildlines*, which has received multiple awards from the Association of Conservation Information.
- Educational programs in every elementary school in Manchester (over 3,000 students) on fish and wildlife topics. 🐦



Ruby meadowhawk dragonfly

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Great blue herons nest in colonies (or rookeries) in wetlands with standing trees, and can provide an indication of water quality and wetland health.

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endangered species or are located in areas identified by the Wildlife Action Plan as high quality are given additional points,” explained Mike Marchand, a biologist with Fish and Game’s Nongame Program and a member of the ARM fund Site Selection Committee.

“The Clay Pond headwaters project was selected for funding because it is within one of the largest unfragmented blocks of land in southern N.H., was among the highest-ranked habitat statewide by the Wildlife Action Plan, and provides protection for endangered wildlife and a diversity of wetland resources,” Marchand said.

“Clay Pond is a great example of how the N.H. Wildlife Action Plan is being used in local communities to permanently protect land,” said John Kanter, Coordinator of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. “This is just one of many projects underway throughout the state. We are thrilled to see the science behind the Wildlife Action Plan resulting in on-the-ground acres conserved to protect wildlife habitat and natural resources.” 🐦

Fast Facts: Bicknell's thrush

Status: Not listed

Physical description: 6.75 inches long and weighs 1.1 oz. Head, back and wings are grayish brown; pale throat and chest with dark brown spots; white belly and rusty gray tail.

Habitat: Balsam fir forests on high-elevation mountain slopes between 3,500 and 4,500 feet.

Range: Northeastern U.S. and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. In New Hampshire, found in the White Mountains. Migrates to the Caribbean for the winter.

Diet: Insects and wild fruits.

Threats: Habitat loss and degradation. In the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Cuba, where they winter, 75% to 90% of forest habitat has been lost.

Interesting fact: New Hampshire contains nearly half of all suitable habitat for Bicknell's thrush throughout its entire breeding range.



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Bicknell's thrush
(*Catharus bicknelli*)

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2000, State Wildlife Grants have provided nearly \$5.7 million to N.H. and over \$573 million nationally.

Historically, nongame wildlife – here in New Hampshire and elsewhere – had taken a back seat to management of sport fish and game species, for lack of a stable funding source. With the flourishing of the Nongame Program over the last ten years, Fish and Game is now able to look at wildlife and habitat in a much more holistic way; it is understood that anything that's done to support a certain habitat or species has the potential to help entire suites of species, to the benefit of all wildlife – and people, too.

For the 12 years before State Wildlife Grants came to be, donors like you made it possible for a young Nongame Program to establish a network of conservation partners and demonstrate its ability to improve conditions for endangered species like osprey and bald eagles. In the ten years since State Wildlife Grants, these donations have provided the matching funds required to receive the federal funds. But our results are not measured in dollars and staff – rather, in the improved health of wildlife populations and habitats. Some highlights of our success include:

- A comprehensive **Wildlife Action Plan** – one of 56 for the U.S. states and territories.
- **Science-based maps** of the state's most important habitats, and a program to

deliver them to communities throughout the state.

- The return of our wild **Karner blue butterfly** population.
- A colony of 2,600 pairs of **common, roseate and Arctic terns** on our coast.
- A five-state effort to keep **New England cottontails** from declining to the point of needing expensive federal endangered species listing.
- Over a thousand acres of **critical habitat conserved** for future generations.
- Dozens of **organizational partners** using the Wildlife Action Plan's strategies and mapping data to complete large and small conservation projects across New Hampshire.

Uncertain Future

Unfortunately, despite all of the good things that have come from State Wildlife Grants here in N.H. and across the country, these federal funds are appropriated annually by the U.S. Congress and are far from assured as the program enters its second decade. Rapid changes are threatening the health of land and water that people and wildlife depend on – but the establishment of a long-term, dedicated source of wildlife conservation funds that's needed to keep pace remains a distant goal.

In recent years, Nongame Program resources have also proven critical in

responding to emerging wildlife crisis situations. A few years ago, for example, we couldn't imagine that White-Nose Syndrome would devastate entire populations of bats, or that important ecosystems would be at risk from a major oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. And yet, dramatic events like these, and their terrible effects on our wildlife and habitats, occur with increasing frequency and intensity.

So, though it's a good time to reflect on – and celebrate – how far we've come in a short period of time, we must not stop planning for the future. The next decade is in large part about readiness, about our ability to use what we know about wildlife and habitat to avert crises, and to act fast when they do occur. We must continue to build a network of conservation lands that buffer our natural places and processes from the impacts brought about by the growing demands of people. We also must continue to reestablish closer ties to the land and water that we and all future generations depend on.

It is with great pride that I look back at our accomplishments to date. And it is with great optimism that I continue to work – together with our many partners, including our individual supporters and donors – to build our conservation capacity, and to secure funding dedicated to managing and protecting New Hampshire's diversity of wildlife.



Thanks, Nongame Supporters!

Thank you to all those who responded in support of our special appeal last fall! With your support, research efforts are underway up north in the high-elevation spruce-fir forests of New Hampshire. The Nongame Program at N.H. Fish and Game is carrying out one-of-a-kind studies to find out how the development of alternative energy sources may impact wildlife. Our researchers are monitoring and radio-tracking state-threatened American marten in the snow this winter, and biologists are preparing to survey Bicknell's thrush as they return in the spring. Both of these studies are being done in areas where wind turbines may one day be built. Ultimately, the results of these studies may be used throughout the country to determine potential impacts to wildlife from the development of alternative energy sources. Thank you for your continued support.





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All gifts are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to NHF&G/Nongame Program

WINTER Wildlife Almanac

JANUARY

- Snowy owls visit New Hampshire during the winter and can be found in seacoast marshes.

FEBRUARY

- American (pine) marten scurry along the ground in the subnivean zone, under the snow, searching for food. These brown weasels are listed as threatened in N.H. and only occur in high-elevation spruce-fir forests.

MARCH

- Watch for painted turtles on warm sunny days. Look for them on logs or along the edges of ponds and marshes, where they may bask in the sun to warm up after a long winter.

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