



Wildlines

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

Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Breeding Season Update

Dear Wildlines Readers,

Each fall, we devote an issue of Wildlines to sharing news of the breeding season for species the NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM and its many cooperators are working to restore. Many of these species faced daunting challenges, from car collisions to devastating storms to predatory cats and gulls. Some, like

common terns, came out victorious, while other species, like bald eagles and piping plovers, struggled to even add one more to their number. Read on to see how your favorite nongame or endangered animals are faring. And thank you for giving each of these species a chance to recover and thrive in our beautiful state.

Restored Tern Population Continues to Expand

The restored common tern population on the Isles of Shoals doubled in size this breeding season, attracting terns from other nesting grounds where they don't have as much protection.

"It was a really phenomenal season," summed up biologist Diane DeLuca of the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

AUDUBON and the NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM jointly spearheaded the restoration effort in 1997 and continue to monitor and manage the birds, which are on both the state and federal endangered species lists. A major part of the project is a continuous human presence on Seavey Island to keep gulls away from tern eggs and chicks.

Besides providing habitat for more than 2,500 common tern chicks to fledge, Seavey Island also gave safe haven to 25 pairs of nationally endangered roseate terns and one pair of state-endangered arctic terns.

Roseate terns typically nest where common terns are already established. One pair nested on the island last year. "The fact that we went from one to 25 pairs of roseates is really, really encouraging for continued future growth for roseates," DeLuca said.

DeLuca said many of the common terns that have claimed most of the island as their own for breeding are coming from areas off Long Island, Maine and Massachusetts, because thanks to the restoration project, Seavey

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Nearly 700 pair of common terns fledged more than 2,500 chicks. A great success that began with six pairs in 1997.

Island offers relatively low predation pressure from gulls. "They're having more trouble elsewhere," she said.

The roseates fledged 20 chicks.

The arctic tern pair hatched two chicks, but one of them was killed by a gull and the other's fate is unknown. Just the fact that they chose the island for nesting is significant, though, DeLuca said.

"It's been years and years since arctic terns have been known to hatch chicks in New Hampshire," she said.

As for the common terns, continued growth is expected but not at the current explosive rate. "I expect it to slow down. I just can't see that continuing," she said. 🐦



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BIRDS OF PREY

THE NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM works with the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE to monitor and manage the state's peregrine falcons, bald eagles and ospreys. Following are field reports for these species.

Peregrine falcons set breeding records

Peregrine falcons not only nested in more New Hampshire territories this year than ever recorded, but they also succeeded in raising 27 chicks, a new high since the restoration project began in the mid-'70s. They occupied 14 territories and nested in all of them. Nine of the nests were successful. When you consider that pesticide use nearly wiped out the species in the Eastern U.S. back in the 1950s, these numbers look even better.

"Clearly in the last half-century these are the highest levels we've had," said biologist Chris Martin of the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE. "This is a population still growing and expanding and doing well in that process."



© ALAN BRIERE PHOTO

Peregrine falcons were one of the bright stars this breeding season by raising 27 chicks, the highest number since the restoration project began.

Two more bright spots in the peregrine story: Peregrines nested in a new location this year – Russell Crag in Woodstock. And biologists were able to band all 27 of the chicks, with greatly appreciated help from volunteer rock climbers and guides.

Injured Manchester chick gets help from falconers

Peregrine falcons mainly chose cliff ledges in the White Mountains for their nests. One intrepid pair, however, returned to their nest box of last year atop the New Hampshire Tower in downtown Manchester. They managed to fledge three chicks — thanks in part to a steady food supply of the city's pigeons. One of those chicks, however, ran into trouble. When it was just about 6 weeks old, the chick was learning how to fly when it crashed into a car's windshield on Elm Street.

Martin said a volunteer observer was present at the time, heard the car's screeching brakes and ran around the corner of the building to find the injured chick. Wildlife rehabilitators kept the bird for observation overnight. It seemed okay, so they put it back up on the building's roof. It was still there a week later, however, seemingly unable to fly.

Biologists caught the chick in a fish net and took it to Tufts Wildlife Clinic in Massachusetts, where doctors set its broken shoulder bone. After five weeks of healing, the chick returned to New Hampshire, but it had another problem. It had missed crucial time with its parents and hadn't learned how to hunt for itself. For this specialized training, biologists turned to Nancy and Jim Cowan of Deering. The Cowans are licensed falconers and raptor rehabilitators who took on the task of showing the chick how to survive on its own.

At *Wildlines'* printing time, the chick was still in training. "The Cowans are working toward giving the bird enough experience to be able to migrate this fall," Martin said.



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Although it was a bad season for bald eagles, there were seven pairs observed engaging in territorial behavior in addition to the five pairs that nested.

A lean year for bald eagles

Just one known bald eagle chick fledged in the state this year, in spite of the species' stunning reproductive success last year.

Last year, six eagle chicks fledged from four successful nests. This year, out of five pairs occupying nests, just one pair successfully reared a chick. Two other pairs showed evidence of egg laying, but their efforts seem to have been thwarted by capricious spring weather. One pair had hatched a chick, only to lose it when the nest fell from its tree in Hinsdale.

"A support branch under the nest snapped during a wind storm in early May, dropping the nest 80 feet to the ground," said biologist Chris Martin of the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Martin found the chick's body under the fallen nest.

The other pair had incubated one or more eggs at the Pontook Reservoir nest but abandoned the nest around hatching time at the end of April. "There was an accumulation of snow on the nest. We suspect that was related to the failure," Martin said.

The eagles occupying the traditional site at the north end of Umbagog Lake, where a pair has nested for about the last 15

“Ospreys need to have good weather and clear water... if you get a lot of rain and a lot of wind, that’s going to make things real difficult for them,”

years, did not show evidence of egg laying. The successful nest was also on Umbagog, but it was located south of the traditional site.

Biologists were able to climb to the successful nest, examine and band the eagle chick before it fledged. They also took a blood sample to be used in a study of mercury levels in the aquatic food web.

Perhaps the brightest aspect of the season was that seven pairs of bald eagles were observed engaging in territorial behavior, so prospects for next year are promising.

“Sometimes you have poor reproductive years; sometimes you have good reproductive years,” Martin said. “In a way maybe we got a little spoiled last year, because the results were so good. I’m optimistic about the next several years.”

Bald eagles remain a federally threatened species that is considered endangered in New Hampshire.

For ospreys, it’s location, location, location

The state’s recovering osprey population fared well this year, with 38 chicks fledging from 26 known active nests (16 of which were successful). Nesting success had a lot to do with location, however. Ospreys in Coos County had about a 50 percent success rate, while those in the Great Bay area were 100 percent successful (all six

nests there produced young), and those in the Merrimack River watershed enjoyed great productivity as well.

Heavy rains at peak hatching time may have played a part in hindering the northern ospreys’ efforts.

“We think the weather may have had a big impact,” said Jillian Kelly, the non-game and endangered wildlife technician who monitors osprey nests in the North Country.

Storms may have even hampered the ospreys’ ability to pluck perch, suckers, sunfish and other fish from the water.

“Ospreys need to have good weather and clear water... if you get a lot of rain and a lot of wind, that’s going to make things real difficult for them,” Kelly said.

Observers visit nesting areas several times throughout the breeding season, usually using a scope from a distance to get a closer look. In the spring, they visit last year’s nest sites to see if pairs have returned. A couple of weeks later, they go back to see if the birds are incubating, which the birds make quite obvious by sitting low in the nest. Later, observers go back to see if the eggs have hatched by either getting a

glimpse of the chicks or observing how the adults are positioned in the nest.

“Then we’ll go back and see how many ospreys actually fledge,” Kelly said.

MARQUIS WALSH PHOTO © NHF&G



Higher productivity in southern New Hampshire and lower productivity in the northern part of the state may have been a result of the weather.

The NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM, the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE and PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE are in the third of a five-year restoration initiative called Project Osprey, which is dedicated to restoring the osprey, a state-threatened species, to New Hampshire. 🦅

A Special Thanks to Volunteers!

In today’s world, where resources are stretched to their limits, volunteers are a critical resource and play an important role in wildlife conservation. For example, piping plovers could not be monitored and information spread to the public seven days a week without the dedication of many volunteers.

The Nongame Program would like to acknowledge the following volunteers for the time they dedicated to the following projects:

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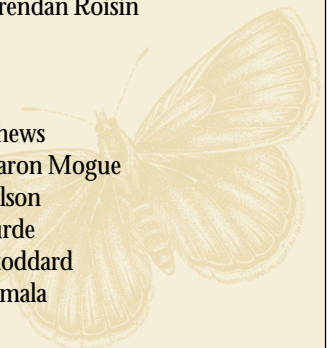
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Karner Blue Butterfly

Project Shows Encouraging Progress

A successful captive-rearing effort and continued habitat restoration have made this year's Karner blue butterfly breeding season the state's most promising in years.

The NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM and the U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE are working with many other agencies and volunteers to restore the Karner blue, a federal and state endangered species, at and around the Concord Municipal Airport.

Over the summer, the project experienced the most mating and egg-collecting success ever.

Each breeding season consists of two broods. In the first brood, 40 pairs of butterflies were observed mating and produced more than 2,000 eggs. The second brood provided more than 800 eggs that will be protected over the winter, with the resulting butterflies to be released in the spring. Nongame program staff also collected 200 eggs from a large New York population of Karner blues in August, bringing the total to 1,071 eggs to be protected over the winter.

The captive-rearing success moves the restoration effort past a major hurdle.

"We've kind of proven to ourselves that we can generate the kind of

numbers (of eggs) we need to restore a population here," said Michael Amaral, an endangered wildlife biologist with the U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

The high numbers of eggs this year were made possible by the use of a new

breeding facility provided by the N.H. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD near the restoration site.

"The facility, an old Army barracks, was transformed into a captive rearing lab that has a greenhouse-type roof... it provided the right environmental conditions for the Karners," said Alina Pyzikiewicz, a NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM biological technician. Renovations were done by FISH AND GAME'S ACCESS AND ENGINEERING DIVISION.

The NATIONAL GUARD is also supporting the ongoing habitat

restoration at the airport and a nearby conservation easement.

The Guard's involvement stems from a 10-year agreement under the *National Environmental Policy Act*. The act requires federal agencies like the Guard to consider the environment in any construction projects undertaken. The Guard is relocating its Army Aviation Support Facility from Pembroke Road to 25 acres of nearby airport land, which, like the rest of the area known as the Concord Heights, is on pine barrens, the rare habitat required by Karner blues and other species. The Guard's new aviation facility will provide hangers for the new Black Hawk helicopters and accommodate the city of Concord's plan to extend Regional Drive. The extension will cut through the Guard's current runway area.

"To help offset the effects of building a new facility, we are providing for habitat management... and we are also in the process of

restoring habitat on the existing facility," said Zack Boyajian, the Guard's environmental program manager.

The habitat restoration work done over the summer was extensive. Heavy equipment thinned large tracks of land within the conservation easement abutting the airport, allowing for more sunlight to penetrate to understory as well as creating a lot of disturbance: two key elements necessary for a pine barrens habitat to flourish.

The machinery also created skid trails to serve as potential migration corridors for Karners and many other species, and also as fire breaks for future controlled burns.

Fittingly, it was New Hampshire's

next generation that kicked off the habitat restoration work in late winter.

Once again,

Concord schoolchildren cultivated wild lupine plants in their classrooms and planted the seedlings at the restoration site in the spring.

"They did the whole thing," said Celine Goulet, a habitat restoration technician with the NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM. "They carried their plants, they carried their water, they shoveled the holes.... They did a great job."

"We're still laying the foundation for making this work," Amaral said. "We still have to make it all happen." 🐦

"We've kind of proven to ourselves that we can generate the kind of numbers (of eggs) we need to restore a population here,"



With solid progress made in captive rearing and habitat restoration, things are looking up for the Karner blue in New Hampshire, but many challenges remain.

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MARCUS WALSH PHOTO © NHF&G

Bat survey finds 6 species

U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey finds no Indiana bats

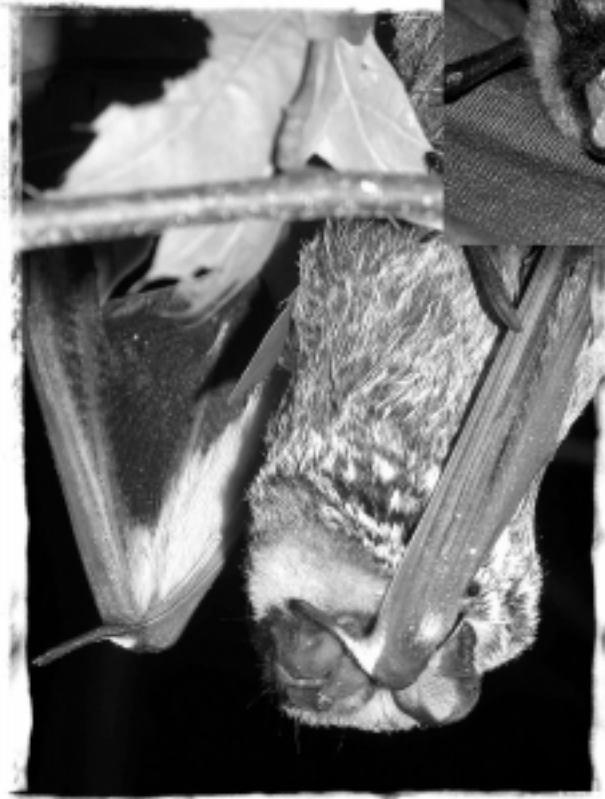
Two bat surveys over the summer found six species of bats in New Hampshire, including the state-endangered small-footed bat.

The U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE and the U.S. FOREST SERVICE coordinated and funded a survey of 11 locations all over the state, as well as one location in Vermont. In New Hampshire, sites along the coast, in the White Mountains and in the southern section of the state were targeted. This survey, conducted by netting bats along their nighttime travel corridors, resulted in 103 little brown bats, 46 northern long-eared bats, 39 big browns and one red bat.

The other concurrent survey, conducted by the Air Force's New Boston satellite tracking station, found those species and two more: the small-footed bat and hoary bat.

The surveys help provide a starting point for future studies of bat distribution and abundance, since few such surveys have been done, and none over such a wide area of the state.

"This is the first time such an expansive survey has been done," said biologist Susi Von Oettingen of the U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.



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The hoary bat (left) and the state-endangered small footed bat (top) were two of six species of bats found during a survey conducted by the New Boston Satellite Tracking Station.

The survey was telling in what it did not find – no Indiana bats, for instance, and no silver haired bats. "There was not a lot of diversity in this area," Von Oettingen said.

The captured bats were weighed, measured and banded to provide information on migration patterns. 🦇

Blanding's Turtle Project Yields Important Data

Thanks to a study now nearing its end, researchers have collected a great deal of new information about Blanding's turtles.



MARCOUS WALSH PHOTO © NHF&G

Blanding's turtle

The study involved capturing the turtles, fitting them with radio transmitters and then tracking them over the course of one to two years to see what kinds of habitat they use and for what purposes.

The cooperative project involved the NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM, the UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE and the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, with funding from the DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES.

The effort has amassed new information about mating, estivating

(times when the turtles stay in one place, seemingly to rest and wait out periods of hot, dry weather), hibernating and migrating.

"We saw quite a lot of mating activity, which is something pretty poorly documented," said Robin Jenkins, a UNH research assistant.

Now the task is to analyze the data to find out which wetlands areas are of most importance to Blanding's turtles.

"It's too soon to say what habitats they prefer, but I think we'll be able to do that. We're still teasing apart the information," Jenkins said.

We'll fill you in on the study's full results in upcoming issues of *Wildlines*. 🦥

Spring Storms, Predators Wreak Havoc on Piping Plovers

The breeding season for piping plovers got off to a great start when seven pairs of the nationally threatened, state-endangered birds returned to New Hampshire's coast this past spring to nest. Sadly, it all went downhill from there.

Five of the pairs nested at Seabrook's town beach, while the other two chose Hampton Beach State Park. All told, those seven pairs produced 44 eggs, but 75 percent of them were destroyed before they could hatch. Of the 11 chicks that managed to peck their way out into the world, all died but one, which fledged from one of the Hampton Beach nests.

Coastal storms caused most of the losses.

"We had a big storm come through in May. We had wind and rain and sleet ... a lot of the nests were lost," said Allison Briggaman, this year's piping plover monitor. "A lot of the pairs re-nested, and everything looked good. But then in June we had another storm come through that wiped out some more nests. We had had some chicks hatch the week before that storm, and we lost those chicks then. It was really very sad."

Predators took their toll on the plovers as well, especially cats who prowled at night. "We would see their tracks down by the dunes," Briggaman

said. Predators were probably responsible for the death of one of the adult plovers, as well, she said.

This is the sixth year plovers have nested along New Hampshire's coast, where the birds weren't seen for 25 years previously. THE NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM has worked with several other agencies and many volunteers to erect temporary fencing around their nests and educate beach users to watch out for the birds. THE NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM hires a monitor to help protect the birds each season.

Piping plover adults, chicks and their eggs blend into the environment extremely well, making them difficult to see. Because of this, they run the risk of being stepped on by beach visitors.

There were many positives to the breeding season, despite just one chick fledging.

Many volunteers came forward, some even from out-of-state, to help watch over the nests, thanks to Briggaman's Internet recruitment efforts. And Briggaman said support from beach users and residents was strong, with most people very understanding of the need to rope off some areas of the beach.

In addition, the fact that seven pairs returned to breed is a good sign for next year, when perhaps the spring weather will be a bit more forgiving, sparing the plovers as they try once again to make New Hampshire their breeding destination. 🐦



ERIC ALDRICH PHOTO © NHF&G



Spruce grouse

North Country breeding bird survey shedding light on long-term trends

NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE staff spent two days in the North Country in June helping DARTMOUTH COLLEGE conduct an annual breeding bird survey at the Dartmouth College Woodlands in Second College Grant.

The survey is a long-term monitoring effort to determine population and distribution trends and habitat requirements of forest birds like the spruce grouse,

black-backed woodpecker, boreal chickadee and palm warbler.

This survey is important in that it is both long-term and conducted in remote forests. When combined with roadside surveys, it helps provide a more complete picture of New Hampshire's bird species, especially many northern species of concern. 🐦



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Thank You for Sticking Your Neck Out!

The NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM is pleased to acknowledge over 700 donors for their generous support of our 2002 Annual Fund Campaign. Each spring we have come to rely on committed supporters like you to make the work we are doing to protect nongame wildlife possible. We are especially grateful to you for "sticking your neck out" to help us protect the

Blanding's turtle this year. The NONGAME PROGRAM truly appreciates your loyal and generous support of our 2002 Annual Fund Campaign.

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FALL Wildlife Calendar

OCTOBER

- Pine marten kits, after spending the spring and summer with their mothers, disperse in search of their own territories each fall. They will spend the winter hunting for smaller mammals like mice, voles and moles under the snow.

NOVEMBER

- Small flocks of migrating thrushes are still moving through the state. Watch also for the last phoebes to fly southward.

DECEMBER

- Winter bird surveys take place from December through February. Your help is needed! You can find information about Audubon Society surveys at www.nhaudubon.org, (click on "Birding Information") and/or the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at <http://birdsource.cornell.edu>.

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