



In Connecticut, Thirty Years of Success

For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has helped prevent the extinction of our national treasures. Because of the act, beloved symbols of America such as the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon are thriving and rare species such as the bog turtle, once thought extinct, are appearing again in our forests and wetlands due to habitat conservation efforts.

Only nine of the 1,800 species protected by the act have been declared extinct since its passage in 1973. Such an astonishing success rate makes the act a true symbol of our nation's commitment to protecting our natural heritage for future generations. It is also an example of the progress that can be made when communities work together to conserve their local wildlife and habitat. With the participation of communities, business and government, less than one percent of development projects reviewed under the act have been halted, proving that we can conserve wildlife without sacrificing progress. With the creation of jobs from tourism and outdoor recreation related to endangered species, it can truly be said that people all over Connecticut benefit from the act.

Connecticut currently has 22 endangered and threatened species (19 animals and 3 plants).

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Bald Eagle

When Europeans first arrived in North America in the 1600s, an estimated 100,000 bald eagles called the continent home. Then habitat destruction, illegal shooting and the deadly effects of pesticides such as DDT took their toll, and the bald eagle declined throughout the United States. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs were found in the lower 48 states, and in 1973, the bald eagle was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. However, due to the banning of DDT, success of reintroduction programs, habitat and nest protection measures and other efforts to restore bald eagle populations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has now proposed removing it from the threatened list altogether.

In 1992, a pair of bald eagles nested in Connecticut for the first time since the 1950s and produced two healthy chicks. A pair of eagles continues to use this nest in Barkhamsted, and several more pairs are nesting and producing chicks along the upper Connecticut River. By early April 2002, eight



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Peregrine falcon

eagle pairs had nested and up to 100 eagles now winter along major rivers and large reservoirs. This number is slowly increasing, all but ensuring that the bald eagle will continue to soar over Connecticut's skies for generations to come.

Peregrine Falcon

The peregrine falcon was a regular nester in Connecticut from the 1860s through the early 1900s, but peregrine activity declined through the 1920s and 1930s. Nesting peregrine falcons completely disappeared from the state in the late 1940s. This decline is directly attributed to the effects of pesticides, particularly DDT, on breeding populations. In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT in the United States and in 1973, the American peregrine falcon was listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. But by 1975, the entire population of peregrines in the eastern United States was gone.

Since then, successful reintroduction programs, using captive-bred birds, have helped restore small breeding populations along the East Coast. The Peregrine Fund, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring peregrine populations, has conducted a large captive-breeding program. Many of the birds raised in this program have been successfully introduced into the wild at potential nesting sites. At the beginning of the reintroduction program, a large number of the young

peregrines were killed by great horned owls and raccoons because there were no adult peregrines to protect them. Now, many of the birds are reintroduced in urban locations where the threat of predation is virtually nonexistent, and pigeons are an abundant food source. In 1997, peregrine falcons successfully nested on the Travelers Tower in Hartford (also the site of Connecticut's last known peregrine nesting in the 1940s). There has also been a report of successful nestings in Bridgeport. In 1999, based on the recovery of peregrine populations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service formally removed the peregrine falcon from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.

Piping Plover

Hunting and egg-collecting nearly wiped out piping plover populations at the turn of last century. Federal law offered migratory birds some protection in 1918, but after a brief recovery, populations declined again after World War II as seawalls, piers, parking lots and summer homes gobbled up habitat. The piping plover was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1986.

Connecticut is doing its part to help the piping plover rebound. Chicks have fledged in consistent numbers on Connecticut's shores every year since the bird was listed and 2005 was a record year, with 55 young plovers taking flight. This success is attributed to aggressive conservation measures put into place by the

Piping plover



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Department of Environmental Protection, which conducts an annual, volunteer-driven search for nesting areas, which are then closed to beach activity. It is hoped that with the continued support of Connecticut's shoreline communities that the state will continue to serve as a safe-haven for these fragile birds.

Economic Benefits of Protecting Wildlife and Habitat

Ecotourism represents a huge economic force in the country. Each year, millions of Americans travel and pay to view wildlife and take in all that nature has to offer. Much of this activity takes place on the hundreds of national wildlife refuges spread across the country. Nationwide, visits to wildlife refuges generated more than \$1.3 billion in income for local and state economies and an addition \$150 million in tax revenues. Indeed, national wildlife refuges received nearly twice as many visitors in 2004 than Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Acadia, Grand Teton, and Statue of Liberty national parks combined. And the vast majority of those visitors came from outside the area, further testament to the ability of these special places to draw people and dollars to a region.

For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit www.saveesa.org.



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