

# The Endangered Species Act



Red knot

## In New Jersey, 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 species native to New Jersey such as the bobcat and the Pine Barrens treefrog are recovering 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 New Jersey benefit from the act.

New Jersey currently has 27 endangered and threatened species (20 animals and seven plants).

### Red Knot

The red knot makes one of the most spectacular migrations of all the shorebirds on the planet. Beginning at the southern tip of South America, this tiny bird flies up to Brazil, feeds, continues on to the coast of New Jersey and Delaware for one more feeding stop before heading all the way to the Arctic to breed. Recently however, there has been great concern about the continued ability of the red knot to use Delaware Bay as a migratory staging area due to the increased harvest of horseshoe crabs whose eggs provide a vital food source for the birds. Studies show a significant decline in the spawning horseshoe-crab population during the past decade and consequently, a lower concentration of crab eggs, leaving many migrating shorebirds without enough to eat. Unable to gain sufficient weight during their Delaware Bay stopover, many shorebirds lack the energy to complete their Arctic migration.

This spring, however, both New Jersey and Delaware took significant steps to protect the red knot population from further decline. Both states imposed restrictions on horseshoe crab harvest and on public access to Delaware Bay beaches to allow shorebirds to feed undisturbed. Emergency applications to list the bird as endangered and longer-term moratoriums, complete with compensation for horseshoe crab harvesters, are pending. It is hoped that these efforts will allow this tiny bird to continue to grace New Jersey's shore, a renowned destination for this nation's avid bird-watching population.

### Bog Turtle

The bog turtle is a palm-sized turtle that spends much of its life hidden. Bog turtles thrive in the cool, soft muck of marshes, which provides them with cover and comfort when it's hot and a safe, protected place to hibernate during the colder months. Once abundant throughout New Jersey, bog turtles are now primarily found only in rural areas such as Sussex, Warren, Hunterdon and Salem counties. Large-scale agriculture, urbanization, wetland alterations and storm water outputs have depleted bog turtle popula-



Bog turtle

tions from much of the state.

Since the 1970s, biologists have studied the life history, habitats and distribution of the bog turtle in New Jersey. It was listed as an endangered species in New Jersey in 1974 and as a threatened species throughout the United States in 1997. Current conservation efforts include habitat management, population monitoring, land acquisition and landowner education. As of 2003, there were 238 individual wetlands known to support bog turtles in New Jersey, making the state one of the largest strongholds in the range of the bog turtle in the eastern United States. The state's Endangered and Nongame Species Program is also implementing a comprehensive management plan to provide long-term conservation of important bog turtle populations.

### **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 additional \$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

In New Jersey alone, the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in the southeastern part of the state generated \$14.4 million in economic activity for the local area, while Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in the northern part of the state generated \$2.7 million, and the southern Cape May National Wildlife Refuge generated an additional \$489,200. New Jersey is also one of the country's most favored destinations for bird watchers, who pump millions into the state's economy each year.

For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org).

## **What You Can Do**

The Endangered Species Act works because of individuals like you who help make it a success. To assist Defenders of Wildlife in protecting the act and make it work better for all concerned, we urge you to:

- ✓ Communicate with your elected officials about the importance of the act.
- ✓ Work with your local media to educate the public about the act's accomplishments.
- ✓ Reach out to others in your community and urge them to get involved.

To learn more about the Endangered Species Act and ways you can help protect America's vulnerable species, please visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org).



**Defenders of Wildlife**

1130 17th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036-4604

tel 202-682-9400 | fax 202-682-1331

[www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)

 PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

**For the latest updates, visit [www.saveesa.org](http://www.saveesa.org)**