



## In New York, 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 York such as Roseate tern and the shortnose sturgeon are recovering on our beaches and riverbeds 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 York benefit from the act.

New York currently has 34 endangered and threatened species (24 animals and 10 plants).

© U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



### Peregrine Falcon

The decline of the peregrine began after several years of widespread use of the pesticide DDT following WWII. DDT residues cause eggshells to thin to the point where it inhibits healthy reproduction. By the early 1960s there were no breeding pairs of peregrines left in the eastern United States, and they were placed on the endangered species list in the early 1970s. But thanks to the Endangered Species Act's protections, this charismatic bird has made a remarkable recovery.

The carefully monitored release of young captive-bred peregrine falcons in New York between 1974 and 1988 helped lead to their return as a nesting species. Peregrines first returned to nest on two bridges in New York City in 1983. Two years later, in 1985, they were again nesting in the Adirondacks. The population has grown steadily ever since. By 2003, close to 50 pairs were present statewide. About 20 pairs nest on cliffs in the Adirondacks, and there are peregrine

nests on every Hudson River bridge south of Albany and on buildings or bridges in Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Binghamton, Buffalo and New York City. Much to the delight of many new Yorkers, the Big Apple now has 16 pairs of falcons, one of the largest urban populations anywhere. One pair, "Jack and Diane," starred in a popular Webcam broadcast from their nest atop a 54-story high-rise at the southern tip of Manhattan.

New York City's captivation with this majestic bird has been mirrored across the country as conservation and reintroduction efforts have literally saved the bird from extinction. Based on the recovery of peregrine populations nationwide, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service formally removed the peregrine falcon from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife in 1999.

### Roseate Tern

A marine coastal species, the roseate tern breeds along the coasts of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans on salt marsh islands and beaches with sparse vegetation, but the roseate tern population is estimated to have fallen by 75 percent since the 1930s. Recent survey data indicate that 87 percent of the birds in New York nest in one colony at Great Gull Island. Status and distribution of roseate tern populations are monitored annually by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in cooperation with the American Museum of Natural History, The Nature Conservancy and other researchers. A key success in New York was the nesting of roseate terns and 60 pairs of common terns on Gardiners Point Island in 1995. This site supported no terns when habitat management began in 1990. In addition, in 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecological Service field office in Long Island partnered with the Boy Scouts of America and the U.S. Geological Service's Biological Resources Division, on the development and construction of roseate tern nesting boxes. These boxes are augmenting the restoration projects and efforts to reestablish roseate tern colonies at some of their historic nesting areas and allow the

species to continue its recovery and once again populate New York's shorelines.

### Shortnose Sturgeon

The shortnose sturgeon was decimated over the last century by a combination of over-fishing, and habitat degradation and loss from the construction of dams. Maintenance dredging of navigation channels and trapping of sturgeon eggs and larvae in turbines of electric generating plants are continuing problems for sturgeon. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, large tidal rivers, such as the Hudson, were dumping grounds for pollutants leading to major oxygen depletions and high fish mortality. Shortnose sturgeon were listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 and later automatically included on the first list of species protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

In contrast to other shortnose sturgeon populations, those in the Hudson River have made a remarkable comeback, experiencing a four-fold increase from approximately 13,000 fish in 1979. A recent population survey put the numbers of shortnose sturgeon at well over 60,000 adult fish. Improved water quality is thought to be the key factor in the Hudson. Since the mid-1970s, largely in response to the Clean Water Act, New York has been taking steps to improve water quality in the Hudson, including bringing two new sewage treatment plants on line. The water quality in the Albany Pool below Troy Dam, a key spawning area for shortnose sturgeon, has improved almost 100 percent, a pattern that, if maintained, points to a bright future for the shortnose sturgeon in New York.

### 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



Roseate tern

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 York alone, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in the Finger Lakes region of the state generated \$1.8 million in economic activity for the local area.

For more information on the success of the Endangered Species Act, 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)