



## In Pennsylvania, 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 Pennsylvania such as the Northern riffleshell and the Indiana bat 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 Pennsylvania benefit from the act.

Pennsylvania currently has 25 endangered and threatened species (19 animals and six 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, but populations have since dropped for many reasons. The bald eagle declined throughout the United States due to habitat destruction, illegal shooting and the deadly effects of pesticides such as DDT. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs were found in the lower 48 states. 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 reclassified



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Northern riffleshell mussel

the bald eagle from endangered to threatened in the lower 48 states in 1995, and plans to remove it from the threatened list are underway.

Pennsylvania's nesting bald eagle population has exploded over the past two years. The increase has been so large, so quick, it is unparalleled elsewhere in the eastern United States. The state's bald eagle nesting population has more than doubled, up from 20 to 41 nesting pairs. Every year the birds expand into new areas, in some places where eagles haven't nested in more than 100 years. The bald eagle's comeback is no accident. It is the result of the protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, the banning of DDT, and bald eagle reintroduction efforts involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian provinces and state fish and wildlife agencies, including the Pennsylvania Game Commission, which conducted an extensive reintroduction program beginning in 1983. Today, Pennsylvania can boast some of the best bald eagle viewing sites in the country.

### Northern Riffleshell Mussel

Historically, the northern riffleshell mussel was found throughout the Ohio River system and in portions of the Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair drainages. Like other freshwater mussels, the riffleshell is an important indicator of the health of an aquatic ecosystem. A filter feeder, it absorbs dissolved oxygen from the water and is highly sensitive to changes in water quality. Unfortunately, habitat destruction and pollution due to impoundments, channelization, agricultural practices, siltation and reduced water flows have eliminated more than 95 percent of its range. On January

22, 1993, the northern riffleshell mussel was listed as endangered.

In Pennsylvania, the Northern riffleshell has been recorded in streams ranging from medium-size creeks to large rivers in drainages of glacial landscapes of the Ohio River basin. These surviving Pennsylvania riffleshell populations are some of the best remaining. Research is currently underway to assess the threats these imperiled mussels face and to learn more about their habitat preferences and spatial distribution within their habitat. This information will be used to better protect remaining populations and to reclaim habitat and restore the riffleshell to other parts of its historic range in Pennsylvania, a state where it already has a few strongholds.

### 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 Pennsylvania alone, Erie National Wildlife Refuge in the northwestern part of the state generated \$406,300 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).

## 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).



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