

CONSERVE Wildlife

Newsletter of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program
www.njfishandwildlife.com Winter/Spring 2002

Storied A.C. Peregrine Dies

State's oldest nesting falcon was N.J. native

Since 1985, what was originally the Golden Nugget hotel-casino has gone through numerous ownership changes: Bally's Grand, The Grand and now the Hilton. But through it all, there has been one constant: the female peregrine falcon perched on the 23rd-floor ledge just outside the hotel's pent-house suite

When she first arrived, she was a first-year peregrine, yet another vital piece in a fledgling restoration program that, in the ensuing years, would repopulate the East with the fastest bird on earth after DDT had decimated it. Ensnared in an ENSP-installed wooden tray, in 1988 she mated and began raising young. Since then, outlasting several mates, she raised 25 chicks.

Unfortunately, her storied life ended last October. Kathy Clark, the ENSP principal biologist who heads the ENSP's peregrine program, received a call that a peregrine was down in Atlantic City. The weak bird had blood on her upper bill --indicating she had suffered an impact injury. Judging by the age of the bird's leg band, Clark knew the bird was the Atlantic City female, the oldest nesting peregrine in the state.

Clark delivered the bird to the Raptor Trust rehabilitation center in Basking Ridge, but she died that night of severe injuries. Clark, who expects another female will replace the bird this year, was understandably saddened. "She'd been around nearly as long as I've been a biologist," says Clark. "I felt a kinship

from our many years at her nest, banding her young."

Last June, as Clark was returning the bird's two chicks to the ledge after she had banded them inside the pent-house suite, the biologist noticed the fierce female accidentally glance one of the building's structural columns.

But Clark will remember more all the times the bird was at her fighter-pilot best, strafing Clark, her assistants and the news photographers who bravely clambered out onto the narrow ledge to record what had become a much publicized, annual banding ritual. In fact, in 1997 within a span of several minutes the bird was able to strike the heads of both an assistant biologist and a photographer. That's why Clark, since then, had been banding the chicks inside.

Ironically, it took her death to solve the final mystery of her existence. In 1994, thanks to a remote-controlled camera, Clark was able to read all but the last digit on her leg band. The numbers confirmed her 1985 hatch date, but without that missing digit she could have been fledged anywhere from Maine to Virginia.

When Clark recovered the fatally injured bird, she recorded the entire banding number, and quickly learned the female had been hatched atop a nest tower erected in

Barneget Bay's Sedge Islands Wildlife Management Area, just 25 miles north of Atlantic City. One of the first offspring of restored, wild-nesting peregrines in New Jersey, she had been a lifelong resident of the Garden State.



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"To actively conserve New Jersey's biological diversity by maintaining and enhancing endangered and nongame wildlife populations within healthy functioning ecosystems."



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Rich Kane, Farewell

Message from Larry Niles, Chief, ENSP

Rich Kane is retiring this year from New Jersey Audubon and our Endangered and Nongame Advisory Committee. Rich joined the committee when the ENSP began back in the 1970s, and since then has participated in nearly every important decision concerning the unhunted wildlife of this state. His counsel has always been wise and direct.

"His contribution to New Jersey has been broad and significant," says Jim Applegate, another original member of the committee and a professor at Rutgers. "His career has made a difference."

Noting that *The Birds of New Jersey*, the New Jersey Audubon book Kane co-authored, has already become a classic, Applegate added, "Rich is also recognized by everybody as Mr. Birder in New Jersey. Among a very elite group of birders, he is the bottom line, the final authority."

I first worked with Rich on a three-day survey of our colonial waterbirds, in 1983. We flew New Jersey coastal marsh in a helicopter, repeating the technique used by Rich and Joan Galli in the late "70s". Rich took the front seat next to the pilot, and commanded us through one of the most grueling bird surveys I've ever done. The copter swerved and pitched for hours, leaving me in cold sweat. But Rich kept directing the pilot, barking orders to me on what to count, keeping an eye on our location in a confusing complex of marsh and water and endless stretches of 15 different species. He didn't just command, he was the commander of the operation. I admired him from then on, as a biologist helping to understand the riddles of our wildlife; as an activist leading New Jersey Audubon's conservation program; and as an advisor on our committee always taking the hard positions representing our state's wildlife.

The birds of N.J., the birders and the conservationists protecting the birds all will feel the gap left by the retirement of this good man.



Rich Kane with a wooden carving of red knots presented to him by the ENSP Advisory Committee.

Photo courtesy of Joanna Burger

Check off for wildlife this tax season

When you complete your state income tax form this year, don't forget New Jersey's wildlife. Conserve Wildlife tax check-off contributions that citizens like yourself make each year are one of the most important funding sources for the Endangered and Nongame Species Program.

The ENSP, which receives relatively few state tax revenues, depends mightily on the tax check-off and a portion of the Conserve Wildlife license plate fees to fund the work that you read about in this newsletter. In fact, the tax check-off and license plate fees are our two biggest sources of revenue. Unfortunately, contributions to both have been declining due to competition from other tax check-off and license plate options. Between 1991 and 2000, for example, revenue from the state income tax check-off declined more than half, to \$232,000.

Which makes it more important than ever for you -- in order to keep New Jersey's wildlife in our future -- to check off for wildlife when you complete your return this year.

PUTTING N.J. 1ST



BALD EAGLES: Record number of nesting pairs (31), active nesting pairs (27) and young (34).

OSPREYS: Productivity has rebounded to good levels, and nesting pairs are up to 340 pairs, a post-DDT record.

PEREGRINE FALCONS: Productivity was up among the state's 17 pairs.

PIPING PLOVERS: Productivity among the state's approximately 120 pairs was the second highest ever recorded.

ALLEGHENY WOODRATS: State's lone population continues to thrive at base of the Palisades.

BOBCATS: Appear to be holding their own, particularly in the north.

PINE BARRENS TREEFROGS: Have been proposed to be upgraded from endangered to threatened status.

BOG TURTLES: Seven new sites discovered. Two bog turtle sites acquired by Green Acres. ENSP obtained about \$50,000 from National Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for bog turtle habitat management and restoration.

AROGOS SKIPPERS: Large colony and expansive area of potential habitat discovered in Morris County



SHOREBIRDS: Red knots and other migrating shorebirds holding their own numbers wise; but for red knot in particular, serious concerns about declines in horseshoe crabs, the birds' productivity in the Arctic and numbers on their South American wintering grounds.

LEAST TERNS AND BLACK SKIMMERS: Numbers of nesting pairs unchanged, but productivity mixed.

TIMBER RATTLESNAKES: Number of new dens located on National Park Service property near the Delaware Water Gap considered secure, but snakes are under significant development pressure on private lands in the Pinelands



WOODLAND, GRASSLAND AND SCRUB-SHRUB NESTING BIRDS: Severe population declines over the past 20 years due to loss and fragmentation of habitat. Among them:

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS: ENSP surveys over the past two years have found very few of these scrub-shrub nesting birds.

CERULEAN WARBLERS: The range of these woodland nesters is also contracting.

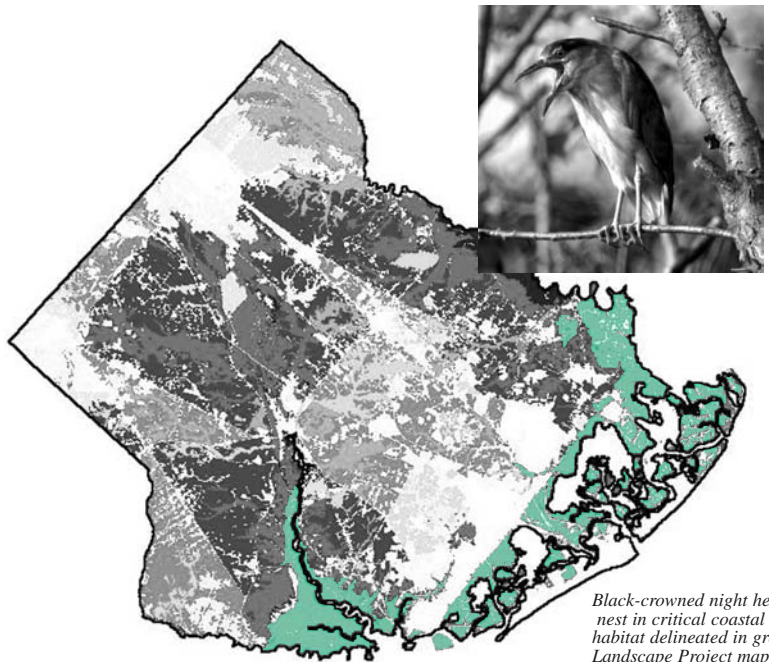


Photo courtesy of Clay Myers.

Black-crowned night herons nest in critical coastal wetlands habitat delineated in green in a Landscape Project map of Atlantic County.

ENSP Landscape Project Maps To Be Used For Wetlands Regs

Last month state regulators proposed using the Landscape Project mapping, which designates habitat throughout the state that is critical to endangered, threatened or rare species, as part of the state's wetland regulations.

The proposals were scheduled in January to be published in the New Jersey Register as part of amendments to existing rules under two statutes: The Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA), which governs development in the coastal zone, and the Freshwater Wetland Act, which governs development in areas involving freshwater wetlands. Once the proposals appeared in the N.J. Register, they became subject to three-month review periods.

The Landscape Project was initiated and implemented by the Endangered and Nongame Species Program.

"This is a stirring endorsement of the science that underpins the maps," says Robert McDowell, the director of the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife, of which ENSP is a bureau. "The proposed use of the Landscape Project mapping by Department of Environmental Protection regulators also represents a major advance in our ability to protect endangered and threatened species. It will increase the public's understanding of what these species need and prove to be a powerful tool for both regulatory agencies and other groups that deal with open space issues."

The proposals were supported by several environmental organizations, including the Highlands Coalition, the Sierra Club and New Jersey Audubon.

The public review periods were schedule to last until April 7 for the CAFRA rule amendment and April 21 for the Freshwater Wetland Act rule. In order to comply with the public review period regulations, the ENSP has furnished each county's central library and county clerks' offices with hard-copy books containing all the Landscape Project maps.

In addition CD-ROMs that contain all the mapping are available -- free of charge only during the review periods -- through DEP's Maps and Publications. If you're interested, call 609-777-1038 or go online to www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs and select "Publications."

Watchable Wildlife:

It's everywhere in N.J.

Whitesbog Village - Lebanon State Forest

This preserved turn-of-the-20th-century cranberry bog and blueberry field village and state forest in the heart of the Pinelands provide excellent wildlife habitat. In February, more than 500 tundra or whistling swans can be seen in abandoned, flooded bogs. In March, pine warblers arrive, followed by eastern bluebirds, eastern towhees, tree swallows and whip-poor-wills -- all common nesters. Abandoned bogs attract bald eagles, great blue herons, ospreys and wild turkeys, while the pine-oak woods harbor redheaded woodpeckers and pine, corn and scarlet snakes. Pine Barrens bellwort, pitcher plants, orchids and sundews are also found.



Photo courtesy of Clay Myers.

Directions: Whitesbog Village: From the junction of N.J. 70 and County Route 530, take CR 530 west towards Browns Mills for 1.2 miles. Turn right at the entrance to the village. Lebanon State Forest Visitor Center: Take Rt. 72 east at the Four-Mile Circle. Turn left a mile marker 1 and take the first right.

Information: Whitesbog Preservation Trust, 609-893-4646; Lebanon State Forest, 609-726-1191.

Hamilton-Trenton Marsh Viewing Areas

Southeast of Trenton, this is the northernmost freshwater tidal marsh on the Delaware River. Two public access points to the marsh include Spring Lake, once part of an amusement park, and the eastern end of John A Roebling Memorial Park. A dirt trail that connects the two access areas offers good birding during the spring migration. You may see yellow-throated vireos, black-and-white warblers, American redstarts and scarlet tanagers along the wooded bluffs, and thrushes, tufted titmice and chickadees in the mountain laurel thickets. Besides muskrats, raccoons and frogs, the marsh harbors mergansers and double-crested cormorants in the winter and ospreys, great blue herons and wood ducks during the spring and summer.

Directions: From the White Horse traffic circle on Rt. 206, go toward Trenton on Rt. 206 for 1.5 mi. Turn left (south) onto Sewell Ave. and go four blocks and turn left downhill at the paved entrance to Spring Lake.

Information: Delaware and Raritan Greenway, 1-609-924-4646 or their Marsh Hotline, 609-452-0525.



Wild Places and Open Spaces Map available

The N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife is offering Wild Places and Open Spaces - A Wildlife Enthusiast's Guide to Finding and Using Public Open Space in the Garden State. The road map offers a wealth of information on exploring New Jersey's open spaces. Public areas, such as state parks, forests and wildlife management areas, are highlighted; an accompanying chart indicates the wildlife and activities, such as boat launches, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, bird watching, fishing and hunting, you might find in a particular area.

To get your copy, send a \$4 check payable to: Division of Fish and Wildlife, PO Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400. Att: Wild Places Map. For discounted bulk orders of 50 or more, call Carol Nash at 609-292-9450.

February

Third week:

- Eastern tiger salamanders lay eggs in vernal ponds

Last week:

- Bald eagles begin laying eggs

March

First week:

- Peepers (small treefrogs) and wood frogs begin calling (could be earlier or later, depending on weather)

Third week:

- Piping plovers begin arriving on beaches
- Barred owls court and begin to nest
- Ospreys return to N.J.

Last week:

- Bald eagle chicks begin to hatch
- Great blue herons and egrets begin arriving at rookeries

April

First week:

- Ospreys begin nesting
- Piping plovers begin courting and setting up territories
- Upland sandpipers return and begin nesting in grasslands and pastures

Second week:

- Hibernating butterflies begin to appear
- Hummingbirds arrive

Third week:

- Coastal herons and egrets begin nesting
- Piping plovers being incubating eggs
- Songbirds begin nesting
- Migrating shorebirds begin arriving on Delaware Bay

Last week

- Timber rattlesnakes start emerging from their winter dens

Wildlife Conservation Corps Citizen Scientist Opportunities

If you are interested in registering and volunteering for any of the following, contact the outreach biologist associated with each project:

Urban Wildlife Survey Project

Some of New Jersey's urban areas have remaining open wildlife areas that need to be revitalized and/or protected. However, the ENSP has insufficient data on nongame, threatened and endangered species in these urban areas. To assure a sustainable and healthy coexistence between humans and nature, it is necessary to survey the status of wildlife in these areas in order to gain a better scientific understanding of their ecological condition and needs.

That's why the Wildlife Conservation Corps' Citizen Scientist Program is launching a major initiative, the Urban Wildlife Survey Project. Its goals are to:

- Help nonprofit groups to further protect, conserve and restore wildlife in their urban areas and benefit public education and awareness;
- Collect wildlife data that can be incorporated into Landscape Project maps, which target and prioritize critical N.J. habitat for planning and conservation purposes.

Volunteers -- both those experienced in wildlife identification and novices interested in being mentored -- are needed to conduct general wildlife surveys that will focus on nongame, endangered and threatened species. Volunteers are needed in Bergen, Camden, Middlesex and Passaic, as well as Burlington, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Monmouth, Morris and Union counties.

A Microsoft PowerPoint slide presentation about the project that is suitable for groups is available. Monthly meetings are also scheduled at Essex County's Weequahick Park. For meeting dates, to schedule a presentation or volunteer, contact Marie Mockers-Numata at 609-777-4136 or e-mail her at mmockers@dep.state.nj.us

Wildcat Ridge Hawk Watch

From February through May, a hawk watch will be conducted at the Wildcat Ridge Wildlife Management Area in Morris County. Coordinator Bill Gallagher needs volunteers to help staff the seven-day-a-week count. A basic knowledge of birds is required; Gallagher will train interested volunteers, who will record sightings and weather data. Contact Larissa Smith at 609-628-2103 or lsmith@gtc3.com

Vernal Pool Investigations

The ENSP has launched a multi-year project to map and certify the thousands of vernal pools in New Jersey. In March, the ENSP will hold training seminars in both northern and southern N.J. for volunteers interested in surveying the pools for breeding amphibians. The seminars will include both a lecture and field training. Volunteers may select particular survey areas that contain specific pools or tracts of land with complexes of pools. The targeted areas will primarily be restricted to rural portions of the coastal plain, Skylands and Piedmont landscapes.

For southern N.J., the seminar will be held 9 a.m.-noon Saturday, March 9 at Rowan University in Glassboro (Snow date March 23). For northern N.J., the seminar will be held 9 a.m.-noon Saturday, March 16 at Somerset County's Lord Stirling Park (alternate date April 6). For information, contact Melissa Craddock at 908-735-4249 or mcraddoc@dep.state.nj.us. To register, specify which seminar you want to attend in an e-mail to vernalpools@yahoo.com



RATTLESNAKE, ENSP PRESENTATIONS AVAILABLE

A new presentation, "Timber Rattlesnakes in New Jersey," has been developed by the ENSP. This presentation, which is about 35-45 minutes long and appropriate for all age groups, is intended to inform citizens of New Jersey about rattlesnakes in the Garden State and to raise awareness about the different threats facing this species.

Some details and results of the "Pinelands Timber Rattlesnake Project" (which was initiated by ENSP in 2001) are also described. Trained volunteers are available to give the rattlesnake presentation to interested groups, clubs or organizations.

NEED A SPEAKER?

The Speakers Bureau offers interested groups an informative slide presentation and discussion on ENSP's efforts to research, manage and protect endangered and threatened species in New Jersey.

More than 50 trained Division of Fish and Wildlife - Wildlife Conservation Corps volunteers are available to conduct the half-hour presentation geared toward adult audiences.

For more details, or to schedule either presentation, please contact Terry Terry at (609) 628-2103, or by e-mail at nongame@gtc3.com.

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Foundation News NJEA Head Bonazzi Chairs CWF Board



Robert Bonazzi, the executive director of the 172,000-member New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), has been appointed chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

"The environment has been a lifelong interest of mine," says Bonazzi, who joined the CWF board last year. A former biology teacher with a M.S. in biology education, Bonazzi once worked for a year in the ecology department of the Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island. Today, whenever he sails in Barnegat Bay or off the N.J. Coast, he tows a plankton net, whose contents he later analyzes under a microscope with Annie, his eight-year-old daughter.

"I think there's a real convergence between the missions of NJEA and the CWF in enhancing interest among students in science and appreciation for the environment," says the Princeton Junction resident.

As chairman, his goal is to enhance the visibility and public awareness of the work of both the CWF and the Endangered and Nongame Species Program, which the CWF supports. "After four years of existence, we want to take the foundation to the next level by increasing its community connections at both the local and state level," he says. "We also intend to seek funding from like-minded national organizations."

Bonazzi succeeds Scott Kobler, Esq., a partner with McCarter & English in Newark who, among other contributions, played a pivotal role in handling the legal work that led to the establishment of the CWF.

VOLUNTEERS, RUNNERS NEEDED FOR MARATHON EFFORT

The Ocean Drive Run Club is holding the 4th annual Ocean Drive Marathon, 5K, 10K, and 1.5-mile promenade on March 24, 2002 between Cape May and Sea Isle City. For the second year in a row, the club will donate proceeds to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation and to the "Shield the Blue" campaign for law enforcement officers in Cape May County.

Both runners and race volunteers are needed. Interested volunteers should call 609-984-6012 or contact kgiannot@dep.state.nj.us. To apply for any of the races, call the Ocean Drive Run Club at 609-523-0880 or visit their website at www.odmarathon.com.

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