

Photo: Mike Davenport

PROTECTED SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Pinnipeds in New Jersey

While the most common large mammals found on New Jersey's beaches during the summer are humans, winter offers the potential glimpse of other beach-lounging mammals called pinnipeds. The word pinniped literally means "fin-footed" and describes amphibious marine mammals including seals, sea lions, fur seals, and walrus.

True seals, not sea lions, occur along the New Jersey coastline primarily between the months of November through April. While none of the seal species found here are classified as endangered or threatened, they are all protected under the Federal Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. Several species of seal have been observed in our state. The most abundant is the harbor seal, followed by the larger gray seal, the harp seal, and the least common,

the hooded seal. Male and female harbor seals look similar, with adult males slightly longer and heavier than females.

Conserve Wildlife Foundation works with the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) to identify and protect wintering colonies and haul-out areas used by seals along New Jersey's coastline. Haul-out areas (where seals come onto land) are important to seals as they offer a place to rest and escape from marine predators, such as sharks, which are their primary predator aside from man.

In addition to identifying and protecting haul-out areas, Conserve Wildlife Foundation and ENSP staff have been working with Dr. Carol Slocum, Associate Professor of Marine Biology at the Richard Stockton

College of New Jersey, to develop a conservation plan for pinnipeds. Since 1994, Dr. Slocum has been conducting a study of New Jersey's largest seal colony.

The first step to develop a conservation plan is to detail the challenges the species, or group of species, face in their habitat. Seals face a number of challenges from human-caused problems such as: starvation due to over-fishing of their prey, collisions with boats and jet skis, entanglement in fishing nets, oil spills, and mortality caused directly by other pollutants or disease which may spread more easily due to weakened immunity caused by pollutants.

Once threats to a species have been identified, actions to alleviate those threats are determined and implemented. In New Jersey, the greatest threat to haul-out sites

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Editor's Commentary

Here at Conserve Wildlife Foundation, we are a small but close group. At the beginning of August, we were thrilled to welcome a new member of our little family. Cooper Grace entered this world, born to Maria, our wonderful Education Manager, and her husband Sean. We welcome Cooper to our world and know that his parents will instill in him their deep and abiding respect for the natural world.

We can only wonder what sort of natural world Cooper will experience as he grows up. Will he live surrounded by the diversity of wildlife we enjoy today? Will he search for salamanders in the woods and watch raptors migrate through our late summer skies? Will he learn the story of the Delaware Bay shorebirds and how they escaped near extinction in the early part of the 21st century? Will he marvel at the fact that our state contained no peregrine falcons for many years?

At Conserve Wildlife Foundation, we hope we are creating a future for wildlife in the state for Cooper and his friends to explore as they grow up. We are working hard to ensure that species grow in number and establish an ever stronger hold in our state. We remain watchful and concerned for populations of wildlife whose numbers trend upwards and ever vigilant for those species that remain unstable in our state.

We work to keep wildlife in our future and our children's future, and with the arrival of Cooper Grace in our midst, we have a wonderful reminder of the reasons for our work and the people who will benefit most from a healthy natural world.



2008 Conserve Wildlife Foundation Golf Classic

Brilliant sunshine parted the grey clouds and launched a perfect day for our ninth annual golf tournament on May 27. Golfers from New Jersey and as far away as Pennsylvania and Maryland enjoyed a day on the links at Stanton Ridge Golf and Country Club in Hunterdon County. This year's golf benefit raised more than \$64,000 in support of rare wildlife conservation.

Bald Eagle Title Sponsor Anheuser-Busch

"Anheuser-Busch is committed to conserving natural resources and protecting wildlife and habitat," said Bob Barraco, Geographic Marketing Manager, New Jersey.

"It gives us great pleasure to sponsor the 2008 Conserve Wildlife Foundation Golf Classic that raises funds for New Jersey's endangered animals and the habitats they depend on. We are especially proud to be a partner in bringing back important species like the bald eagle to New Jersey." To learn more about Anheuser-Busch's environmental efforts, visit www.abenvironment.com ➤



Leonard Charles launches his drive into the middle of the fairway.

Our thanks to all our sponsors, players and volunteers who helped make this year's event a great success!

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Shimir Varia (L) and Johann Lopez (R) of Anheuser-Busch with CWF Executive Director Margaret O'Gorman. (C)

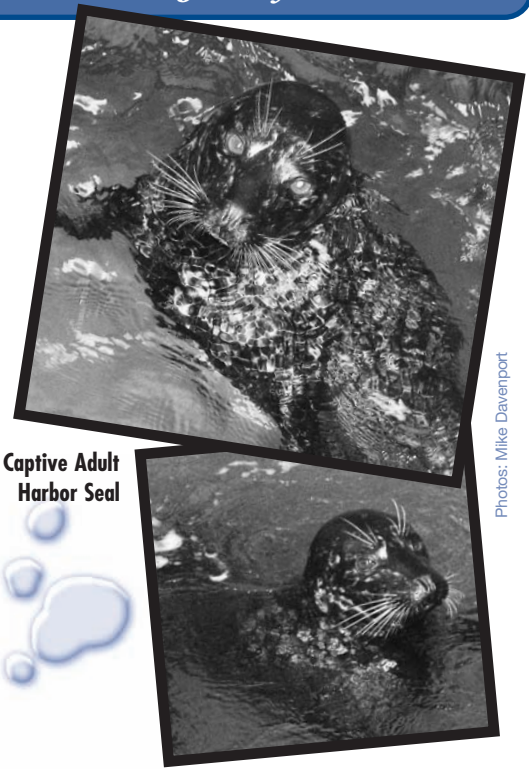
The PROTECTED SPECIES SPOTLIGHT – Pinnipeds in New Jersey

and the seals that use them is disturbance. Seals are exceptionally sensitive to disturbances while they are hauled-out on land, perhaps due to their limited mobility on land. Motor boats, kayakers, and overhead aircraft can send a whole colony back to the relative safety of the water. Each return to the water costs seals much needed energy and could lead them to abandon a site. Any observations of seals should be done at a minimum distance of 50 yards.

There are other reasons to remain at a distance from pinnipeds in New Jersey. Seals may look cute, like big fin-footed puppies, but they can be very dangerous and should not be approached. Seals have a powerful bite which could shame a pit bull, and their mouths contain enough bacteria to guarantee a nasty infection (and possible loss of fingers, hands, or lives).

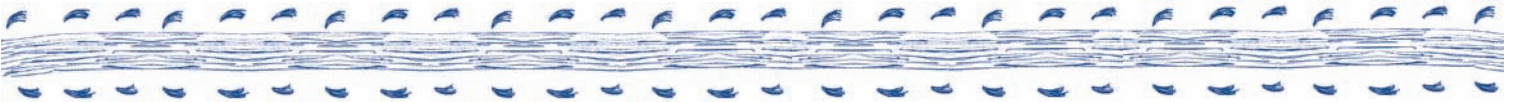
It is against the law to approach a wild seal, touch, feed or harass it.

Despite the many challenges, seals (at least those living on the East Coast of the US) are holding their own. In fact, the number of seals appearing on our coast each winter has been increasing. None of the four species found at haul-out sites in New Jersey are considered endangered, threatened, or even near-threatened—their numbers are increasing within our state. Dr. Slocum has documented that New Jersey has the largest seal haul-out location along the US Atlantic coastline south of Long Island, NY. This group of marine mammals, hunted mercilessly in the past, has rebounded dramatically, and although the outlook for pinnipeds in New Jersey is currently positive, we must all take care to ensure that it remains so. 🦋



Captive Adult Harbor Seal

Photos: Mike Davenport

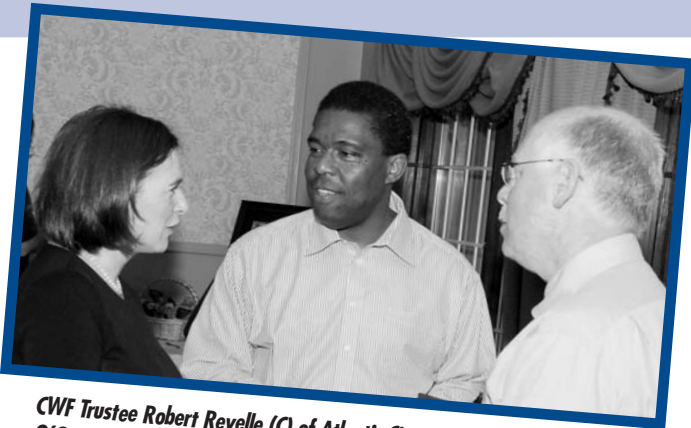


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CWF Trustee Robert Revelle (C) of Atlantic City Electric and Margaret O'Gorman (L) welcome NJDEP Asst. Commissioner Wolfgang Skacel (R) who spoke about a new environmental stewardship program.



Bob Collier (far right) and the ShopRite Supermarket foursome enjoy a great day on the links.



Birdfeeders attract many different birds to your backyard.

Implementing the Wildlife Action Plan At Home

Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ recently held three public Open House meetings to promote the Wildlife Action Plan, the groups working to implement it and the opportunities available for people to get involved by volunteering with a conservation organization or carrying out a program in their own community or backyard. At the Open House meetings, we promoted an array of projects that ranged from native grassland creation on farms to installation of bat

boxes as summer roosts for our native bats. We offered volunteer opportunities to engage in our programs and showed visitors the actions they can take to advance the plan.

Our nationwide strategy to protect biodiversity asks us all to address the needs of wildlife before species slip to numbers so low that all we can do is react with costly and difficult efforts to recover species. New Jersey's Wildlife Action Plan gives us the information we need to take action before recovery is required – to take proactive and cost-effective steps to conserve wildlife before it is too late.

Anyone can participate in the Wildlife Action Plan.

Here are some suggestions of actions an individual can take to protect and conserve rare wildlife in New Jersey:

- Create a backyard habitat:
 - ✦ Planting native shrubs, trees and flowers will attract and provide food for birds, butterflies and bees.
 - ✦ Installing a batbox will create habitat by providing summer roosts for bats;
 - ✦ Providing cover with plants and brush piles makes your garden more attractive to wildlife than a large expanse of lawn.

- ✦ Hanging a birdhouse for the type of bird you want to attract provides habitat and the possibility of watching birds raise their young.
- ✦ Maintaining safe and healthy birdfeeders will protect the birds that visit your garden. Placing birdfeeders near shrubs and trees can protect birds from predators and periodic cleaning of feeders helps protect health.
- Become a Citizen Scientist with Conserve Wildlife Foundation, the Division of Fish and Wildlife or other conservation organizations in the state. Citizen Science opportunities abound for people who want to participate in surveying and monitoring species or in management and protection efforts.
- Ensure your pet is kept on a leash when you walk in areas that contain wildlife sensitive to disturbance. By minimizing disturbances in wildlife areas, we increase chances for young wildlife to survive and help ensure that migrating wildlife obtain enough nutrition to fuel their journeys.
- Reduce your use of fertilizers and pesticides to reduce run-off into nearby streams, ponds or aquifers. Adding chemicals to waterways impacts the quality of the water and the survival of the wildlife that live in the water.

We would like to highlight the work of any town or local group implementing the Wildlife Action Plan. If you are involved in a project to enhance and conserve biodiversity, please let us know at info@conservewildlifenj.org ✈

The Wildlife Action Plan is available online. The plan is a very large document, running to over 500 pages when printed, but groups and individuals can access it through the website of the Division of Fish and Wildlife at www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/ensp/waphome.htm. The best way to do this is through the link to the interactive zone map at the base of the page. This link brings up a map containing the conservation zone and allows a user to enter the plan through their zone of interest. For each zone, lists of species, threats, goals and actions are provided.

Order your 2009 Species on the Edge Calendar

The Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ is excited to announce the publication of the 2009 Species on the Edge Calendar! The Species on the Edge Calendar is a full color, 12-month wall calendar that showcases the winners of the 2008 Species on the Edge Art & Essay Contest.

The Species on the Edge Art & Essay Contest is the Foundation's highest profile education program. Each year, over 2,000 fifth

graders submit artwork and essays about New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife species ranging from the majestic bald eagle to the little-known green floater mussel. A panel of 3 judges, composed of an artist, a wildlife biologist and a teacher, reviews each and every entry and chooses a winner from each participating county. The winning artwork and essays are then used to help us spread our mission of

protecting rare and endangered wildlife throughout the entire state of New Jersey. The contest is a celebration of children's creative spirit and their innate curiosity for the natural world. Be inspired each day by purchasing your own copy of the 2009 Species on the Edge Calendar for only \$10 (plus \$3.50 S&H). To order your copy, visit www.conservewildlifenj.org or call Debbi at (609) 984-6012.

Adopt-A-Species for the Classroom

How teachers and students help protect New Jersey's rarest wildlife residents

On June 16th, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey education staff took a trip to the Goetz Middle School in Jackson, NJ. Our main reason for going was to pick up a donation to the Foundation on behalf of the teachers and students of the school. The donation was raised through a school-wide initiative entitled "Goetz Fosters Respect and Responsibility toward Nature." What had started out as a classroom activity spearheaded by teacher Cynthia Walsh transformed into a school-wide project, engaging all students and staff in learning about the environment and the growing need to protect it.

When we arrived, we were treated to a tour of the school to see all the projects the students had created. Teachers were asked to incorporate the topic of the environment into their curriculum. In Science class, students designed landfills and biomes. They created posters about alternative energy sources and wrote persuasive essays about the need to protect endangered species. In art class, students created sculptures of endangered species.

It didn't stop in the classroom. Students were also actively fundraising to benefit Conserve Wildlife Foundation. The Student Council held a door decorating contest with a "protect our ecosystems" theme. They also held a recycling campaign for old cell phones and sold gummy worms for "Earth Worms for Earth Day." The Arts and Crafts Club sold t-shirts designed by a 7th grade student. The Ecosystems Club held a "Spare Change to make a Change" campaign.

In the end, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey was presented with a check for over \$5,000! This is the largest donation that CWF has ever received from a school. We were overwhelmed by this donation and we were so proud to have worked with the teachers and students of Goetz Middle School. Thank you Goetz Middle School teachers and students!

Teachers and students across the state can participate in saving endangered wildlife. One simple way is by participating in the Adopt A Species for the Classroom Program. Classroom across the state can raise money to adopt one of New Jersey's rarest wildlife residents. In return, students and teachers receive bookmarks, natural history information, lesson plans, and the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping to protect rare wildlife throughout the state.

Adopt A Species for the Classroom applications can be downloaded at www.conservewildlifenj.org/teacher/classroom/aas.html or call (609) 984-0621 for more information or email info@conservewildlifenj.org.

Kids of All Ages Get Out and Look!

September through November is a perfect time to get out and witness the fall migration of raptors in New Jersey. Raptors, or birds of prey, are birds that hunt and eat meat using a highly specialized hooked beak and sharp, hooked claws called talons. Over 15 species of raptors including broad-winged hawks, American kestrels, bald eagles, peregrine falcons and ospreys use New Jersey ridges as they migrate south for the cooler months. Rather than flap their wings, raptors conserve energy during migration by soaring. They float along thermal currents, rising warm air created as the sun warms the side of the ridges. Raptor migration is one of New Jersey's greatest natural phenomena and it is something to witness at least once in your lifetime. Some great places for raptor migration in New Jersey include:

- Sunrise Mountain, Stokes State Forest, Branchville
- Montclair Hawk Watch, Montclair
- Scott's Mountain, Merrill Creek Reservoir, Washington
- Chimney Rock Hawk Watch, Washington Valley Park, Martinsville
- Cape May Hawk Watch, Cape May

Directions and additional information about these migration hotspots can be found at www.hawkcount.org. Take your eyes to the skies and go hawk watching today! ✈

Adopt-A-Species



This decorated door at Goetz promotes respect for nature.

Attention 5th Grade Teachers and Students!

Discover New Jersey's rare and endangered wildlife! Enter the 2009 Species on the Edge Art & Essay Contest. The contest will open on November 1, 2008 and close on January 31, 2009. To reserve your contest kit, call (609) 984-0621 or send an email to info@conservewildlifenj.org

Enhancing Habitat for New Jersey's Peregrine Falcons

On April 15, 2007, a rare spring storm that stretched from the mid-Atlantic to New England battered New Jersey with record levels of wind and rain. Winds gusted up to 50 mph. Roads were closed and power was cut to thousands of homes across the region. In the New Jersey Palisades Interstate Park, eight inches of rain fell in a single day.

On the cliffs at the Palisades, four pairs of peregrine falcons sat out the storm trying to protect their newly-laid eggs on ledges exposed to the elements from all sides. As the wind hurled the rain at the cliff face, the absence of overhead protection exposed the birds further to the vagaries of the weather. After the storm, three nests had failed. The final nest failed a week later.

On May 12, 2008, another rare spring storm visited the Palisades and the peregrines faced the same rain, winds and cooler than average temperatures. This time they sought to protect newly hatched chicks that had not yet grown sufficient plumage to weather the storm. At the peregrine nest box in nearby Jersey City, one chick succumbed to the cold and wet weather as the mother tried in vain to protect all four from the elements.

In 2002 we celebrated when the first pair of peregrine falcons returned to natural nest areas in the Palisades after an absence of more than 50 years. It was hoped that these historic nest ledges would provide a sound basis from which the peregrine population could recover to the full expanse of their historic range in New Jersey.

But, these last two years with two severe Nor'easters have shown biologists that the population still faces major challenges. The cliffs all face east. Every cliff nest site is at risk from a Nor'easter like those seen in the past two years. The ledges are also very narrow and provide little in terms of shelter for chicks. Some of the ledges are not protected by any overhang.

In the past, explosives were occasionally used to create and enhance ledges in traditional peregrine nesting areas. Ledge dimensions were increased through blasting. This technique is not possible in the Palisades due to the nature of the rock, so Kathy Clark, Principal Biologist with the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species, is partnering with Conserve Wildlife Foundation and Technical Rescue Equipment Company to explore options for enhancing nest ledges by making them wider and installing overhangs. This idea is in its infancy at the moment, but if we can identify and source a lightweight, strong and affordable material to help enhance nest ledges, we can secure a better future for the peregrines of the Palisades and the population as a whole. ✈

Female
Peregrine Falcon



Photo: Beth Balbierz



Become a Part of Earth Share New Jersey

Most of us have heard of the United Way and have probably contributed to their campaigns at some time in our lives, but have you heard of Earth Share? Earth Share of New Jersey is part of a nationwide network of the world's most respected environmental and conservation organizations and is New Jersey's only environmental workplace giving federation. Through this program, employees support quality environmental organizations that make our future healthier and greener. Employees donate through payroll contributions to the nonprofit organization of their choice. And the size of your company doesn't matter; Earth Share programs are designed to fit groups from one to a 1,000 employees.

Earth Share of New Jersey is your company's partner. They work directly with your business during annual enrollment and throughout the year as well. Earth Share not only raises funds for environmental groups, they raise awareness among employees about how to have a healthier and safer world in the future.

As an employee, you benefit, too. Earth Share of New Jersey provides you with a simple way to support your favorite earth-friendly charity. Once a year you decide how much you want to

donate. You can assign a general donation to Earth Share of New Jersey or designate Conserve Wildlife Foundation to receive your contribution directly. Making charitable contributions has never been easier.

Partnering with Earth Share of New Jersey is an easy decision for all the right reasons. Is your employer part of Earth Share? If not, here is what you can do: Visit your local Human Resources Department or Corporate Giving Department and let them know that you would like your company to become a member of Earth Share of New Jersey. Earth Share is a part of more than 60 workplace campaigns right here in the Garden State. Your business will be joining other Earth Share supporters such as Allstate Insurance, AT&T, American Express, Home Depot; colleges and universities throughout the state including Rutgers and the College of New Jersey; and county and federal employees of New Jersey, New York City and Philadelphia, just to name a few.

We are a proud member of Earth Share of New Jersey. When you contribute through your workplace giving campaign and choose Earth Share of New Jersey, you help us, too. ✈

BEHIND THE SCENES *John Braun, CWF's First Aquila Summer Intern*

What is the best thing you get to do with this job?

Seeing wildlife up close. It's rare to get such hands-on encounters with these animals. To experience it regularly really makes you want to go to work everyday and knowing that it is being done in the interest of conservation makes it all the better.

What is the worst thing you have to do for your job?

Driving far distances is the worst thing I have to do for this job. The traffic, crazy Jersey drivers, cost of gas, the pollution it creates and the extra time away from my family are the worst things I've had to deal with.

What has been your biggest success in your current job?

Adding entries to the blog at www.conservewildlifenj.blogspot.com was the greatest success of my current job. I enjoy writing, although I do not do it often. The feed-back I received on the blog has been very positive. I was a little intimidated at first, but once I started I became much more comfortable. The internship was very exciting, which gave me a lot to write about.

What delights you in your daily work?

Learning from all the terrific staff at Conserve Wildlife Foundation and the New Jersey Endangered and Non-Game Species Program. The patience, kindness, and enthusiastic energy of the staff made the experience very enjoyable, positive and productive for me, and, hopefully, for them as well.

Why did you decide to become a biologist?

I decided to become a biologist because I have always loved nature and enjoy observing and studying its diversity, dynamics and complexities. Studying biology in college and applying this knowledge to protect nature in the field is a natural progression.

What is the best thing anyone ever taught you?

My parents and grandparents taught me the best lessons in life. They taught me to be thankful for and proud of all that I have, and to appreciate life and what it brings us, even if at times it is difficult and does not always give us what we want or expect.

What is the one thing you learned working here that surprised you?

How extensive and diverse wildlife is in New Jersey. There are many rare species in the state that are scarcely seen even by someone like me who is often in the woods or out enjoying nature. Until you start studying these animals, you do not realize how many different species there are. It's amazing what you can find when you hike deep into the woods or closely observe our fields, beaches, marshes, lakes and streams. 🦅



John Braun

Explorations

In addition to TRACKS, we also produce an electronic newsletter called Explorations. This newsletter tells more stories about New Jersey's wildlife enabling us to take advantage of electronic communications to present more full-color photographs and more links to information. The most recent edition of Explorations featured a report from the Delaware Bay by our Shorebird Steward volunteers, articles about our peregrine falcon Newspaper in Education series and our recent efforts to build a Bat Gate at Hibernia Mine.

If you would like to subscribe to Explorations, please send your email address to info@conservewildlifenj.org and put "Explorations" in the subject line.

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TRACKS TRACKS

CONSERVE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY • VOL. 01 NO. 03



PHENOLOGY FUN

Phenology is the study of the timing of natural events. The word comes from a Greek word that means "coming into view." Events like the first openings of leaf and flower buds and the first calls of frogs and toads are all considered phenological events. The timing of these events indicate local and global weather and climate changes, as well as other changes to the landscape and habitat. These events are also fun for you and your family to discover and record.

Share your seasonal observations by linking to our blog at www.conservewildlifenj.org/teacher/info.html.

September

First week: Bats begin returning to their hibernaculum. Of the nine bats species in New Jersey, six of them, including the federally endangered Indiana bat, will remain here, hibernating in abandoned mines and caves. The remaining three species migrate south for the winter.

Southbound songbird migration peaks in New Jersey. Some songbirds, like the bobolink, will travel over 12,000 miles in one year from their wintering grounds in Brazil and Argentina to their breeding grounds here in New Jersey and back again.

Third week: Timber rattlesnakes begin entering their dens to begin hibernation. Timing varies among individuals and occurs between mid-September and late October.

Broad-winged hawk numbers peak during their southbound migration.

October

First week: Indiana bat mating reaches its peak. They mate during evening swarming. Females will begin hibernation almost immediately after mating, while most males stay active into November and December.

The fall migration of Cooper's hawks occurs in New Jersey from September to November, but peaks this week.

Third week: Triggered by cooling temperatures, corn snakes begin to retreat to their wintering sites. This will continue through November. Underground burrows, stump holes, or hollow railroad ties located beneath the frost line serve as hibernacula.

November

First week: Cold temperatures for one to two consecutive weeks during late October to late November compel bog turtles to retreat to their wintering sites. Bog turtles hibernate within underground burrows, where freshwater springs ensure that water will flow during the winter, preventing the turtles from freezing.

Third week: Snow geese migration peaks in New Jersey. Other waterfowl such as brant, black duck, buffleheads, and green winged teal can also be found. A great place to witness waterfowl migration is at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in Atlantic County.