



RARE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



Photo: Charles Kontos

Fisher

The woods of New Jersey are alive once again with the unbounded energy of the solitary, nocturnal, carnivore known as the fisher – scientific name *Martes pennanti*. Eliminated over 100 years ago, the fisher is now making a remarkable comeback. Throughout the 1700s and 1800s fishers were relentlessly pursued for the value of their fur while concurrently their forest habitat was destroyed. Now, with improved wildlife trapping regulations, forest re-growth, and nearby reintroduction projects, fishers are striving to reoccupy much of their historical range.

The best description of a fisher would be to imagine a cross between a cat and a fox with the attitude of a wolverine. Weighing up to 20 pounds, fishers have soft, dark brown fur, and are approximately three to four feet in length including their bushy

tails. They are often referred to as black cats in the Appalachian Mountains or fisher cats in New England. Their name is somewhat misleading as they are not cats and they don't catch fish. Their name originates from early settlers who confused fishers with European polecats, known as *fichet* in France.

The prey of the fisher reads like a who's who list of northern forests animals: squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, mice, raccoons, shrews, even martens and porcupines are all targets of this member of the weasel family. Fishers are the only animal that can consistently prey upon the heavily armored porcupine by using an elaborate hunting technique. When a fisher encounters a porcupine on the ground it chases it up a tree to a point where the porcupine can go no further and falls. The fisher will then

climb down the tree headfirst, utilizing hind feet that it can rotate 180 degrees, and proceed to feed on the stunned porcupine. Timber companies release fishers in order to reduce the number of porcupines that can damage valuable trees. Fishers are also known to thin out weak or injured deer, especially in deep snow.

Previously thought to exist primarily in the boreal forests of Canada, fishers have recently been verified along the Kittatinny Ridge of northwestern New Jersey. In 2005, remote camera traps and snow tracking were used to determine if fishers were present in the state. After almost a year of searching, three photographs of a fisher were finally recorded on October 5, 2006, in Stokes State Forest. Since then, numerous additional fisher photographs and sightings have been reported as

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Editor's Commentary

This spring we have had the privilege of a view into the lives of two charismatic wildlife species in New Jersey. Through our partnership with Duke Farms, we have followed a pair of bald eagles bringing up a brood of three eaglets in a nest in central New Jersey. Our other partnership with the Division of Fish and Wildlife allows us to track the progress a pair of peregrine falcons as they raise their young high above the streets of Jersey City.

Thirty years ago, neither of these webcams would have been possible, not only because the technology had not been created yet, but also because the birds were not there to be broadcast. Thirty years ago, the peregrine falcon population had not yet been reestablished in New Jersey and the last remaining pair of bald eagles in the state had not seen any successful reproduction. It would take one more year for the first pair of peregrine falcons to return to the state and two more years before the eagle population would be put on the road to recovery.

Today with 20 pairs of peregrines nesting in New Jersey and more than 60 pairs of breeding bald eagles, we can see the results of the hard work that began 30 years ago and bears fruit that we can all enjoy, thanks to technology and recovered populations of wildlife.

These webcams can be accessed through our website www.conservewildlifenj.org. When you visit, remember to celebrate the recovery of these populations. And don't forget that wildlife watching can also be done outdoors – take a walk, look around and see what species are living their lives in your neighborhood.



Joanne Bruno Joins Board of Trustees



Conserve Wildlife Foundation welcomed Joanne Zakartha Bruno, J.D., to the Board of Trustees in October 2008. Joanne, or “Jo” as she likes to be called, has a strong background in education, social services, and law. She holds a J.D. from Rutgers University Law School in Newark and master’s degrees from Columbia University and Penn State University.

She is a licensed to practice law in New York and New Jersey and is licensed in social work in New Jersey.

Jo is Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at New Jersey City University in Jersey City, a position she has held since 2004. She has served the University in many capacities since 1988, but she is especially proud of founding the University Academy Charter High School and serving as its first president of the Board of Trustees.

Jo has honed her leadership skills through positions with many civic, community and nonprofit organizations. She is a long-time advocate for equal opportunities for women and people with disabilities.

Several community-based organizations, including the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation, Young Wheels Can Fly and United Cerebral Palsy of Hudson County, have honored Jo for her leadership and service to the community. She was selected as a Woman of Distinction by the Girls Scouts of Greater Essex and Hudson Counties.

As Camp Director of the A. Harry Moore Camp early in her career, Jo had a chance to work with severely disabled youngsters in the wild beauty of Stokes State Forest. We’re glad that this experience with the New Jersey School of Conservation expanded her appreciation of wildlife and worked in our favor when she was asked to join our Board of Trustees. Her energy, insight and experience make her a wonderful new addition to our Board. 🦅

RARE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT – Fisher

recently as February 2009. Fishers, cougars, wolves, bobcats, and even deer were virtually eliminated from the state at some point. However, the effective management strategies of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and its partner organizations have helped declining species such as bald eagles and bobcats to recover and, in some cases, reach healthy population levels.

The return of the fisher to New Jersey signifies a pivotal moment in the future of human interactions with wildlife in which animals are appreciated not only for their economic value but also for their ecological role as well as aesthetic appeal. Elusive carnivores such as fishers are extremely important in balancing forest ecosystems by reducing rodent populations and competing with other predators that may negatively impact native plants and nesting

birds. Fishers are an integral part of the natural heritage of New Jersey and their restoration is a testament to the quality of the state's environment. It was once thought that the only way to see an animal like a fisher was to travel hundreds of miles north, but we now have the golden opportunity to spot the glorious fisher right here in the Garden State. 🦋

written by Charles C. Kontos, Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis, Department of Ecology and Evolution, Rutgers University

Ben Wurst, Habitat Manager for Conserve Wildlife Foundation, prepares to release a rehabilitated peregrine falcon on April 19 at a press conference with Congressman Frank Pallone, co-hosted by Conserve Wildlife Foundation and the National Wildlife Federation. Congressman Pallone highlighted the need to safeguard natural resources in the face of a changing climate. Jeanne Woodford of Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge joined the group at Baysshore Waterfront Park in Port Monmouth, New Jersey, to release the bird back into the wild.



A Race for Survival

Marathon runners have a lot in common with the species of wildlife we seek to protect. They endure hardships related to weather, they can never get enough to eat and they take long journeys in pursuit of important objectives.

When the Ocean Drive Run Club decided to donate a portion of the proceeds from the annual Ocean Drive Marathon and 10-Miler to support our work on rare species protection, we felt that we had found a perfect fit.

On a drizzly Sunday morning in late March, more than 1,100 dedicated long distance runners lined up at the starting line in Cape May, New Jersey. Their training was done, their goals were set, and, in the end, their efforts on race day rewarded them with the satisfaction of completing a challenging race. They also supported rare wildlife protection throughout the state.

“It is very rewarding to see the sense of accomplishment on the faces of each and every runner who crosses the ODM finish line in Sea Isle City,” said Race Director Ed DePalma, “and it’s been extremely rewarding for us to have the opportunity to contribute over \$10,000 to Conserve Wildlife Foundation since the beginning of our partnership. We are strong supporters of the important work that this organization does to protect New Jersey’s endangered and threatened wildlife, and

we hope to continue in our partnership to achieve the success that we all envision, well into the future.”

Adding a charitable component to any event is easy and it elevates the event, adding something extra to it. The Ocean Drive Run Club has supported us since 2001 and we are very grateful for that support. We relish the idea of human stamina supporting wildlife endurance.

You can support rare wildlife protection in New Jersey through your community, church or environmental group events. Your generous group gift to Conserve Wildlife Foundation will help ensure the future for many of our animals that are struggling to survive. For more information, contact Pat Shapella at 609-292-3707.

Created in 1999, the Ocean Drive Marathon has attracted a large loyal following. A 10-Mile Race was added in 2000 and the event now includes a 5-Mile Race and a 1.5-Mile Fun Run/Walk. Runners know the Ocean Drive Marathon as a USA Track & Field-NJ 500 Point Grand Prix event. Members of the USATF-NJ participate in Grand Prix events to accumulate points for top prizes and achieve qualifying times for other races. The Ocean Drive Marathon also attracts runners from the 50+DC Club who have run marathons in 35 states and plan to compete in marathons in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 🦋

Wildlife Action Plan *in action*

The Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership

This spring, a new crop will be sprouting in one of the fields Tom Michalenko farms in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. A long-time hay farmer, last year Michalenko planted 30 acres of warm season grasses. These deep-rooted, late blooming grasses are more suited to the region's climate and provide critical habitat for declining grassland bird species. He did this with guidance from MacKenzie Hall, Private Lands Biologist for Conserve Wildlife Foundation. MacKenzie reached out to Mr. Michalenko, a tenant farmer who leases land in several townships in central New Jersey, because the land he works was identified as key for restoration in the Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnerships Grassland Conservation Plan.



Photo: Mackenzie Hall

The Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership is a diverse group of public and private organizations focused on the priorities identified for the Central Piedmont Plains in the state's Wildlife Action Plan. The Partnership was created in 2005, when 10 organizations joined together to conserve and restore grassland bird habitat, a quickly disappearing resource in this fast-growing region of New Jersey.

With support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Partnership jointly developed a Grassland Conservation Plan in 2006 using data from the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program. It identified key grassland habitats throughout the region and recommended three actions: restoration of publicly owned land; restoration of private land; and land acquisition. A copy of the Grassland Conservation Plan can be found at: www.njaudubon.org/Conservation/Regionalplanning.html.

Each of the organizations involved in the Partnership has a role in implementing the Grassland Conservation Plan. Additional funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation allowed

organizations in the Partnership to initiate restoration projects. New Jersey Audubon Society, a partner in the effort, will restore 463 acres of grassland habitat at Six Mile Run and the South Branch Wildlife Management Area. MacKenzie Hall has worked with several landowners and to oversee the restoration of 263 acres of grassland and has secured funding for an additional 112 acres of restoration in the coming year. Mackenzie is having on-going discussions with other key landowners and tenant farmers, hoping to securing funding to restore another 200 acres of private land to promote habitat for grassland bird species. The Partnership also has a goal to protect 250-500 acres of critical grassland habitat through acquisition in the next year. To achieve this goal, the Partnership is working with New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance and the D&R Greenway Land Trust in conjunction with local and county officials.

In the coming year the Partnership, thanks to an additional grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, will be revisiting the State's Wildlife Action Plan for overall guidance as it develops conservation plans for forests, wetlands and riparian corridors in the Central Piedmont Plains. For more information about the Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership and how you might join in its efforts, go to: www.conservationresourcesinc.org/rpwhp.htm. ↗

written by Anne Heasley of the Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership

Large, unbroken hay fields are important nesting grounds for grassland birds like the bobolink, Eastern meadowlark and vesper sparrow. Many farmers receive incentive payments to hold off mowing until young birds have fledged from their grassy nests.

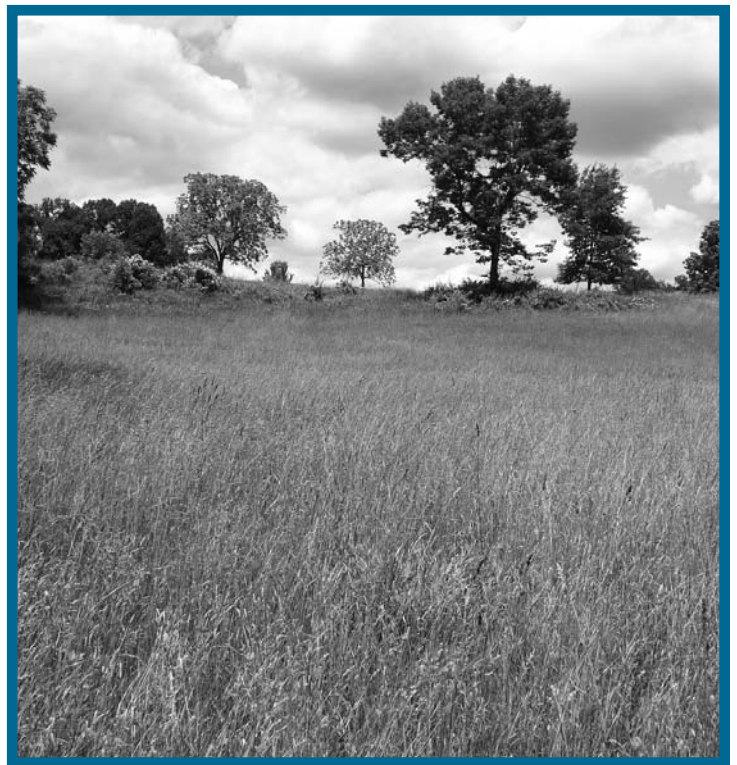


Photo: Mackenzie Hall

How to Make a Wildlife-Friendly Community

A group of dedicated citizens called the Montclair Backyard Habitat Project is working to certify the township of Montclair as a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Community Wildlife Habitat. Members carry out various activities to inform the community about wildlife-friendly gardening and landscaping. They also certify a required number of homes and other properties as NWF-recognized backyard habitats, including schools, businesses, parks, and houses of worship. The NWF assigns points toward certification, with one point for each home, five for each school, and three for each business, house of worship, or public area.

When work began on the project about five years ago, Montclair had about eight certification points. Now they have 196 points and expect to reach their goal of 250 next year. This dynamic group has

- compiled lists of native plants beneficial to wildlife;
- convinced a local garden center to carry a line of native plants;
- conducted their own sales of native plants;
- promoted composting and organic garden care;
- helped to organize a stream clean-up;
- developed a PowerPoint presentation on backyard habitat;
- and conducted public tours of local backyard habitats.

The Montclair Times and New Jersey Life and Leisure have helped publicize their efforts with feature articles.

While a number of towns across the country have participated in this NWF project, Montclair is the first one in New Jersey. It is a project that could easily be carried out in other towns and one that would be especially beneficial in towns located in less developed parts of the state.

For more information visit: www.MontclairWildlife.com. ↗

Conserve Wildlife Foundation Presents the 2009 Women & Wildlife Awards



Above: Michele Byers (l.) of the NJ Conservation Foundation and Jane Morton Galetto admire Jane's Women & Wildlife Inspiration Award

Below: Leadership Award winner Dr. Amanda Dey (l.) poses with her award and Maya van Rossum of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network



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Get Out!

At this time of year, wildlife is everywhere. You never know what you will see when you are out and about. Most animals are focused on reproducing and caring for their young. Bald eagle chicks are well-developed and getting ready to fledge, or fly for the first time. Grassland birds like the bobolink and Eastern meadowlark are hard at work incubating eggs and caring for newly hatched chicks. Painted turtles or box turtles can be found digging holes to lay eggs. It is a perfect time to GET OUT and see what you can spot in your backyard, schoolyard, or community! You don't need fancy equipment – just some eyes and ears that are open and curious to the wonders of wildlife.

Go outside and choose a spot to sit down. Get comfortable. Maybe bring a notepad to jot down what you see, what you feel,

how you feel. Get quiet – try not to move too much. Now observe. What do you hear – birds chirping? Frogs calling? Children playing? What do you see? What types of trees are shading you? What plants are within your reach? What do you feel – the sun on your face, a cool breeze in your hair? The cool touch of a rock underneath you? Spend some time learning about this place. Get to know it in all seasons and at all times of the day. You will be amazed at how much there is to know about this one small area. Use this spot as a jumping off point to study other locations nearby or far away. Get out and start exploring. ↗

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” – Albert Einstein

Species on the Edge Art & Essay Contest

We are proud to announce the winners of the 2009 Species on the Edge Art & Essay Contest! From over 2,000 entries, 20 winners (one from each participating county) were chosen. The Contest connects 5th grade students to the rare wildlife that live in their communities and empowers them to take steps to protect these wildlife species. To see the winning artwork and read the essays please visit www.conservewildlifenj.org.



Artwork: Joseph Hernandez

Artwork: Karen Wang

Congratulations to:

Atlantic County

Sophia Piediscalzi
William H. Ross School, Margate

Bergen County

Griffin Asnis
Ho-Ho-Kus Public School, Ho-Ho-Kus

Burlington County

Minna Kim
Hartford School, Mount Laurel

Cape May

Devon Nagle
Dennis Township School, Dennisville

Cumberland County

Jaclyn Kell
Durand Elementary School, Vineland

Essex County

Gabriel Borges
Ann Street School, Newark

Gloucester County

Stephanie Palese
J. Mason Tomlin School, Mantua

Hudson County

Khyle Lizo
Soaring Heights Charter School, Jersey City

Hunterdon County

Brendan Duer
West Amwell Township School, Lambertville

Mercer County

Karen Wang
Village School, Princeton Junction

Middlesex County

Shoshana Levy
Solomon Schechter Day School, East Brunswick

Monmouth County

Isabella Olaguera
Ocean Township Intermediate School, Ocean

Morris County

Caitlyn Sebastian
Ironia Elementary School, Randolph

Ocean County

Taylor Baile
Veterans Memorial Elementary School, Brick

Passaic County

Cielo Cua
Randall Carter School, Wayne

Salem County

Myla Ahmed
Alloway Township Elementary School, Alloway

Somerset County

Claire Tao
Mount Prospect Elementary School, Basking Ridge

Sussex County

Elena Sorce
Hardyston Elementary School, Franklin

Union County

Tyler Goerke
Roselle Park Middle School, Roselle Park

Warren County

Joseph Hernandez
Homeschooled in Great Meadows

“As time goes on there are fewer and fewer of us cute little creatures. People are invading our environment by polluting the grounds and taking away our natural habitat. Please stop clearing the forest areas for new construction because doing this will continue to endanger myself and my friends. I cherish the forest floor...”

– Jaclyn Kell writing about the blue-spotted salamander

“Save the whales! Free Willy! Sure, the big guys get all of the attention, but what about us bugs? We don’t have a big Hollywood contract. They’ll never make a movie about us, so I need to speak up because we’re in trouble, too.”

– Caitlyn Sebastian writing about the American burying beetle



BEHIND THE SCENES

Michael J. Davenport, Marine Species and GIS Programs Manager

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

When I can escape from my computer, I get to go out in the field and observe the wildlife for which I'm responsible for entering data. It makes plotting points on a map much more meaningful when you have a better understanding of the conditions on the ground (or in the sea).

What has been your biggest success in your current job?

Initiating the tracking of marine wildlife, such as marine mammals and sea turtles, for the Biotics database of the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP). Although there are 11 marine species on New Jersey's list of endangered and threatened wildlife, only terrestrial and freshwater species had been tracked previously. As of this moment, ENSP now has mapped locations and associated data in New Jersey waters for seven of those species.

If you could be one animal (that lives in NJ of course!) what would you be and why?

I would be a humpback whale (yes, they are in NJ waters), despite the fact that they face many threats such as entanglement in fishing gear and being struck by ships. I love the ocean and swimming and humpbacks are truly majestic, intelligent animals. Although they aren't vegetarians as I am, they do feed fairly low on the food chain, so I can live with that. Plus, they often spend their winters in such places as the Caribbean or Hawaii.

What is the best thing anyone ever taught you?

I learned to appreciate wildlife from my grandmother who would often take me on her rounds when I was a child as she tended her garden and flowerbeds, pointing out the toads and birds in the yard.

What wildlife "lives" in your office?

Aside from a co-worker in my cubicle, there have been sightings (and other "evidence") of a mouse in adjacent cubicles. Thus far, I haven't seen it in mine.

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

Commuting is definitely a downside because I live at the shore and work in Trenton. It's not only due to the distance and the greenhouse gases that I'm generating, but also due to the fact that I hate driving.

What were you doing before you answered these questions?

Hoping that one of my co-workers would be asked to answer them instead. ↗



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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 story about our Osprey Project, an update on the status of beach nesting birds, and an article about how volunteers are saving frogs, toads and salamanders at road crossings.

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

TRACKS TRACKS

CONSERVE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY • VOL. 02 NO. 02



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 indicates 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.

May

Second week: Horseshoe crabs begin to lay eggs, or spawn, on Delaware Bay beaches. Spawning will continue through early-mid June, coinciding with the new and full moons.

Grasshopper sparrows have arrived at their breeding grounds. Females construct nests at the base of a clump of grass in shallow depressions. More often heard than seen, this secretive bird emits an insect-like melody which sounds like a grasshopper.

Fourth week: Bog turtles begin mating when the air temperatures exceed 77°F. Mating will continue through June. Females will deposit their eggs through mid-July, in open areas with raised hummocks of sedge or sphagnum moss.

June

First week: Bats begin to form maternity roosts throughout New Jersey and females will give birth to one pup. Young bats develop quickly and will be able to fly and feed on their own in about 4 weeks. Do you know the location of a summer bat roost? Participate in the Summer Bat Count!

Second week: Corn snakes have completed mating. A species of the southeastern United States, the corn snake reaches its northern limit in central New Jersey.

Third week: Bald eagle chicks are fledging. Depending on the nest, chicks could fledge as early as late May and as late as mid-July.

July

Third week: At approximately 8 weeks old, Cooper's hawk young are fledging. They vacate the nest and perch in nearby branches at 30 to 34 days old and fly shortly thereafter. Have you witnessed the hunting of a Cooper's hawk at your bird feeder?

Similar in size and appearance to the more common cabbage white butterfly, checkered white butterfly adults can be found in open areas such as old fields, vacant lots, and power-line right-of-ways. They are active into early October.

Fourth week: Black-crowned night-heron chicks fledge. Chicks fledge at about 6 weeks of age. Following fledging, some young disperse far from their birthing areas, traveling as far north as Quebec and Newfoundland, and migrate south during the fall.