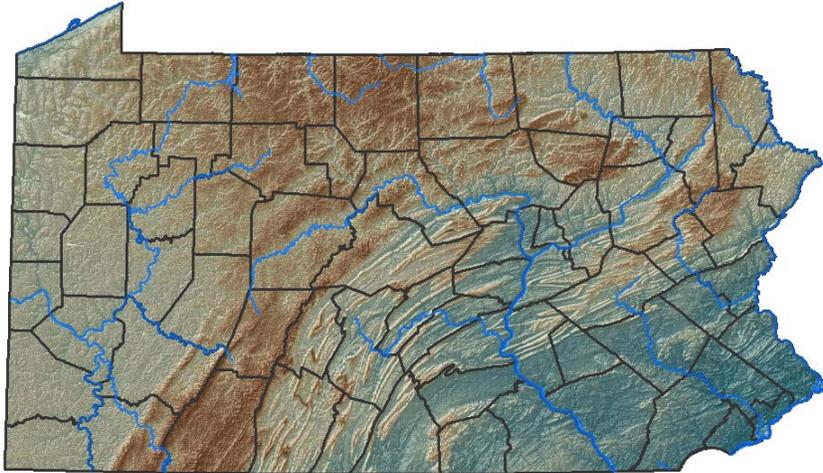


PENNSYLVANIA'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN



VERSION 1.0a

**In fulfillment of requirements of the
Wildlife Conservation & Restoration Program and
State Wildlife Grants Program.**

Compiled and Edited by
*The Pennsylvania Game Commission and
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*



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FOREWORD

This Wildlife Action Plan is an unprecedented step forward in the maturation of Pennsylvania's natural resource management. Too long in coming, this strategy recommends ways to plug the gaps in resource management that Pennsylvania has endured for decades. Concern for deficiencies in the state's conservation of fish, wildlife and invertebrates can be documented back to the infancy of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in the 1800s. But limited funding and personnel, as well as insufficient public interest and support, have – at least until recently – conspired to force resource agencies into narrowly-defined management roles that limited them from working for the greater good of all fish and wildlife.

Attempts to bridge the gaps in Pennsylvania's conservation of wildlife picked up momentum in 1982 with the creation of the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, a funding entity that has worked hard over the past quarter-century to help conserve some of Pennsylvania's unique and critical flora and fauna. Inter-agency coordination and partnering with conservation organizations and universities also has augmented the wildlife conservation coverage the Commonwealth provides. But the financial support Pennsylvania truly needed to significantly expand coverage really didn't materialize until the passage of the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grants Program. Both programs have pumped millions of dollars into Pennsylvania's conservation efforts since 2001 and subsequently have improved the effectiveness of the state's fish and wildlife management programs.

As an outcome of the State Wildlife Grants program, the development of the Wildlife Action Plan is a benchmark action, designed to proactively manage and safeguard this state's declining fish and wildlife. And it's not a moment too soon. Development and urban-suburban expansion continues to claim important habitats. The statistics on land lost to development provide a dramatic picture of how the landscape is changing. In the five-year period, between 1992-1997, 545,000 acres of Pennsylvania's open space were developed; development that occurred particularly in agricultural areas. This comes out to approximately 90,833 acres lost to development per year, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture figures cited by the Philadelphia Inquirer in 2001. Add to that the associated mortality issues for wildlife associated with increased vehicular traffic, pollution, improper use of herbicides and pesticides, and increased encounters with people who both unintentionally and intentionally place them in harms way, and it becomes blatantly clear that wildlife needs help. More than its been getting, and as much as Pennsylvania's Constitution guarantees in Section 27, which emphasizes the importance of "...the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment."

While endangered species grab the headlines, this Strategy isn't for endangered species; it's designed to prevent species of special concern from becoming endangered by monitoring fish, wildlife and invertebrates, and proactively managing declining populations. The logic behind the Wildlife Action Plan effort is easy to follow. Simply stated, it is to manage proactively, not reactively, to keep common species common. Through proactive management of species of species concern and targeted management of habitats at risk, managers can keep a watchful eye on all wildlife and have sufficient time to intervene while they can still make a difference if a species gets in trouble. The approach should reduce the expensive "emergency room attention" species require when they become endangered.

This Wildlife Action Plan is a welcome shot in the arm to Pennsylvania's Game and Fish and Boat commissions, which historically have been under-funded and under-manned in managing their respective resources. In a state that has long recognized the importance of its natural resources, these agencies often have struggled to manage the public's natural resource estate. Funding has always dictated the level of management these agencies can provide, and more often than not, the public's contribution, gleaned mostly from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, has been inadequate to manage fauna holistically. Fortunately, conservation has still progressed in the Commonwealth, but Pennsylvania is capable of and should be doing more.

The federal State Wildlife Grants Program, and Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan are the Commonwealth's best hope in the near term to extend meaningful management to all of the fauna found within its borders. The Strategy aims to build a foundation from which increased and improved "non-game" species management will be cultivated and refined. It's a tremendous step forward for conservation in Pennsylvania. Coupled with the State Wildlife Grants Program – the reliable source of non-game funding Pennsylvania has sought for decades – the Commonwealth is poised to make a huge difference for wildlife and wild places. In the final analysis, these efforts surely will become milestones in Pennsylvania's wildlife conservation timeline. They are historic and far-reaching, and represent our greatest opportunity yet to shape the future of fish and wildlife management and expand coverage to more species than ever before.

This Strategy paves the way to establish a cooperative conservation network unlike anything this state has ever seen. It is a homerun in concept and its detail is meticulous and complete. Those who worked to piece this Strategy together have created a roadmap that will inspire conservationists and managers, and one that will surely enhance the Commonwealth's ability to manage and conserve its fish and wildlife. It is, unquestionably, a blueprint for the future.

Peter S. Duncan

During the past 40 years, Peter Duncan served in a series of natural resources posts. Former Governor Richard Thornburgh appointed Duncan to head the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Resources in January 1982. From 1983 to 1994, Duncan served as executive director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, which manages 1.4 million acres of public recreational lands. Duncan oversaw the acquisition of more than 125,000 acres of state land during his tenure. From 1996 until 1997, Duncan worked as a consultant to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, an association of government organizations dedicated to natural resources conservation. He is a former president and former Executive Committee chairman of that organization. In July 1997, Duncan was named Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. He now resides in Pennsylvania and remains active in conservation.

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Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan has been developed through the exceptional collaboration of agencies, non-governmental organizations and individual efforts. Through stakeholder involvement, information from several conservation plans were incorporated into this document (See Executive Summary). A special appreciation is directed towards the many scientists and field staff who provided significant guidance to the process and who contributed to the status assessments, species accounts, objectives and monitoring components. The development of the Strategy was guided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with additional developmental support provided by the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. The Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, and the State Wildlife Grants Program are providing additional support to habitat and wildlife conservation.

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