

New York Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

What is a wildlife action plan?

Congress asked each state to develop a wildlife action plan, known technically as a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy. These proactive plans examine the health of wildlife and prescribe actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

New York snapshot

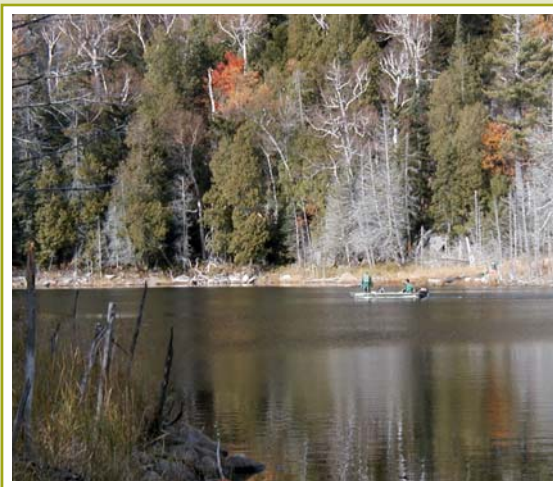
Geography: New York has a stunning array of natural resources from the Great

Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, and the heights of the Adirondack Mountains to the depths of the underwater Hudson Canyon. Our state has 1,894 square miles of inland lakes and rivers and 981 square miles of ocean and estuaries. Forests cover 60% of New York's land

area and contribute significantly to the diversity of our wildlife. Wetlands in New York are incredibly diverse and contain examples of every major wetland class in both fresh and saltwater. Our geographic location places us at the boundary between southern, warmer climate adapted plants and animals and northern, cooler climate adapted plants and animals. Our native fish and wildlife reflect a mixture of both types.

Landscape: Our forests, streams, lakes and ocean have provided bounty first to our tribal nations, then to European settlers. We are now a state of over 19 million residents, 20% of which are foreign born. Our cultural and natural diversity mirror each other and deserve to

be celebrated. The population density of our residents ranges from over 300,000 people per square mile to less than 1 person per square mile. In the 400 years



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of European settlement in our state, there have been changes to our landscape from dense primeval forest to abundant farmland, and now the return of crop lands to forest between our large cities. Every part of the state contains special natural beauty from the wilderness of our forest preserves to the refuges of our stunning urban parks.

Wildlife: We host an amazing variety of wildlife from the huge Atlantic right whale to the tiniest salamanders and animals of all sizes in between. New York is home to the only known population of Chittenango ovate amber snail in the world. There are more dragonfly and damselfly species in New York than any state but Texas and more mammal species than any state in the northeast. However, only 55% of the State's plants and vertebrates are considered secure and the status of most invertebrate species remains unknown according to the New York Natural Heritage Program.

“With the release of New York’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, we intend to build on the solid legacy of natural resource protection and management in this State. The strategy is a step forward into the future of healthy wildlife and habitats in New York for generations to come, but we do not take this step alone. Together with our sister agencies, especially the Department of State and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, we will move forward with the help and support of many partners to fulfill the charge of preserving the vitality and biodiversity of our natural resources.”

*– Denise Sheehan,
Commissioner, NYSDEC*

New York’s planning approach

The Department of Environmental Conservation sought to use the Wildlife Action Plan enhance the state’s efforts to conserve species that improve the lives of New York residents and visitors. Planners used the state’s major watersheds to organize the strategy, both to instill a sense of place to users of the document and to build on the state’s successful watershed programs. Many of these watershed programs have been running successfully for over 30 years. New York’s Wildlife Action Plan offers an opportunity to integrate and strengthen those programs that are primarily driven by water chemistry with goals for fish and wildlife.

Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in New York

Statewide, the top three threats identified were habitat loss and fragmentation, various types of water and air pollution, and invasive species. Poorly planned development that includes road building and



Mussel survey/NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species of Conservation Concern*	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels & Clams	82 known freshwater unknown marine	55 freshwater 5 marine	9 all freshwater
Snails	10 families	14 freshwater 1 terrestrial	1 federally listed 15 state listed
Fish			
Freshwater	>160	40	24 state listed
Diadromous	16	8	1 federally/state listed
Marine	unknown	51	2 federally/state listed
Amphibians & Reptiles	70	44	6 federally listed 20 state listed
Birds	>450	118	3 federally listed 39 state listed
Mammals	92	22	6 federally listed 14 state listed
Totals	>1385	537	32 federally listed 127 state listed

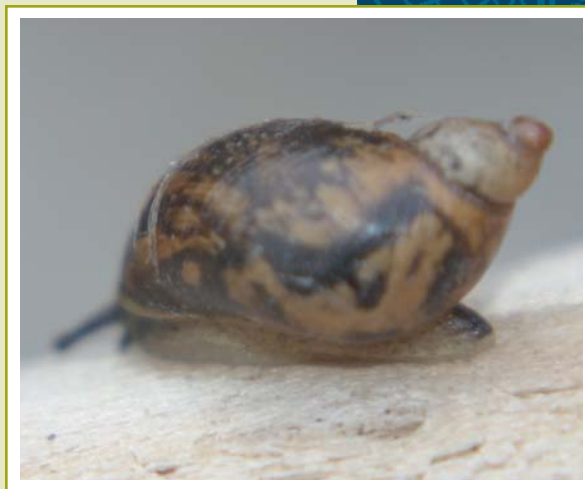
*Species included were selected with a variety of criteria and best scientific opinion of agency staff and cooperating researchers. See full details of the selection process in the NY Wildlife Action Plan.

Wildlife highlights

Key Habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<p>Upland forests cover 60% of the states total land area</p> <p>Ownership: 72% of forest lands in the state are privately owned</p>	<p>85 Species statewide including: American burying beetle, Bald eagle, Barn owl, Spruce grouse, Tennessee warbler, Three-toed woodpecker, Black-crowned night-heron, Scarlet tanager, Wood thrush, American woodcock. Sharp-shinned hawk, Four-toed salamander, Fowler's toad, Northern cricket frog, American marten, New England cottontail, Bicknell's thrush, Indiana bat, Eastern ribbonsnake, Wood turtle, Silvery blue, Southern grizzled skipper, Barrens dagger moth, Least weasel, Longtail salamander</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation of large forest tracts • Low forest diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop land protection strategies for large blocks of unfragmented forests by working with private land owners and public land managers, transportation planners, and local government to reduce planned fragmentation. Development of tax incentives and disincentives, easements, and cooperative management programs is crucial to the achievement of this task. • Increase hunting opportunities in forest tracts where overabundant deer populations are inhibiting forest understory regeneration.
<p>Freshwater Wetlands</p> <p>Ownership: Unknown, but wetlands over 12.4 acres in size are regulated by the state.</p>	<p>97 species statewide including: American black duck, Blue-winged teal, Ruddy duck, Black-crowned night-heron, Glossy ibis, Eastern spadefoot, Red-shouldered hawk, Devil crawfish, Yellow rail, Fowler's toad, Southern leopard frog, Northern harrier, Sedge wren, Short-eared owl, Queen snake, Coal skink, Eastern massasauga, Black meadowhawk, Taper-tailed damner, Seaside golden borer moth, Northern red salamander, Sylvan hygrotus diving beetle, Tomah mayfly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss and fragmentation of habitat • Invasive species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the use of wetland habitats smaller than 12.4 acres by species of greatest conservation need and amend wetland regulatory maps to include those wetlands in protective status. • Expand the control of purple loosestrife in wetlands with conspecific insects statewide. • Educate nursery owners about the threat to wildlife from invasive plant species such as purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed.
<p>Estuaries</p>	<p>86 species statewide including: Alewife, American black duck, American eel, American lobster, Atlantic silverside, Bay scallop, Eastern mud turtle, fiddler crab, Glossy ibis, Horseshoe crab, Lined seahorse, Menhaden, Northern diamondback terrapin, Northern puffer, Osprey, Oyster toadfish, Piping plover, Ribbed mussel, River otter, Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow, Shortnose sturgeon, Tautog, Winter flounder, Yellow-crowned night-heron</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss and fragmentation of habitat • Water quality degradation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the construction of vernal/ephemeral pools into large civil works projects (e.g. beach nourishment, wetland restoration) to provide foraging habitat for shorebirds and breeding habitat for amphibians and dragonflies. • Restore salt marsh habitat. • Implement the USEPA's Phase II regulations for storm water control to improve water quality in coastal receiving waters.

Recommended actions to conserve New York's wildlife

The only place in the world one may find Chittenango ovate amber snails is in the spray zone of Chittenango Falls, located in a State Park near Syracuse, New York. Chittenango snails apparently feed on microscopic algae and other species of microflora that grow on the rocks and vegetation which occur in the spray zone of the waterfall around which they live. They ingest a lot of calcium carbonate for shell development. Adapted to relatively constant environmental and climatic conditions, including a clean water supply, the snail is intolerant of sudden changes. They are most threatened by the invasion of a European snail that out competes our native snail.



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The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is a tool to move our Division forward into a new phase of natural resource management. It allows us to communicate with a broad suite of partners both within and outside our agency in a common language, and move toward achieving common goals to conserve our fish and wildlife populations.

*– Gerald A. Barnhart,
Director, Division of Fish,
Wildlife and Marine
Resources*

sprawling retail and residential development moving into formerly rural and wild areas has a severe impact on most of the vulnerable species in the state. In areas of central and western New York, this increase in developed land is occurring at nearly ten times the population growth rate. The results include a drain on community services and real destruction of the natural resources in the area, without economic or social benefit to the surrounding communities.

Working together for New York's wildlife

The New York State Department of Envi-

ronmental Conservation invited participation from a wide array of stakeholders from the beginning of the planning process. Many scientists and non-governmental organizations participated in the selection of the species of greatest conservation need in 2002 and 2003. A State Wildlife Grants Partnership, consisting of 70 agency representatives, Indian tribal nations, sportsmen's groups, and other conservation organizations, was established in 2003 to assist in developing the Wildlife Action Plan. Many of these stakeholders reviewed and revised sections of the Plan as they were drafted. The entire draft of the Plan was released for public review prior to submittal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Disabled and able bodied bird watchers/
NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation



Jefferson salamander/NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

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