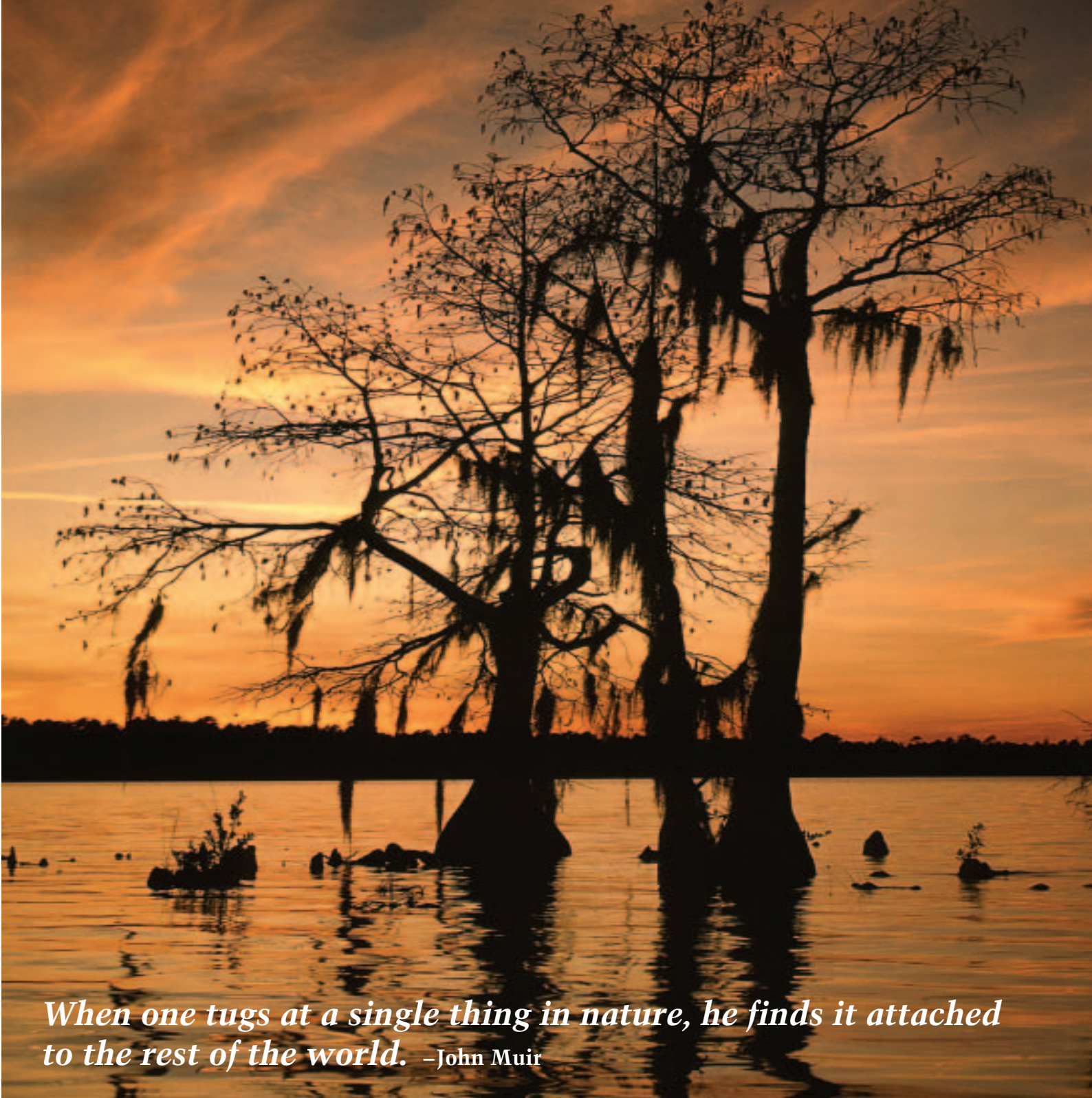


KEEPING
NORTH CAROLINA

WILD



the North Carolina
WILDLIFE **ACTION** PLAN



When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. –John Muir

ECO AUDIT

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission saved the following resources by printing the North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan booklet on New Leaf Opaque 100 (FSC) paper, made with 100 percent post-consumer waste and a chlorine-free process.

The following resources were saved:

- 4 fully grown trees
- 1,577 gallons of water
- 3 million BTUs of energy
- 176 pounds of solid waste
- 344 pounds of greenhouse gases

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02/07

what is the NORTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN?

The Wildlife Action Plan is a comprehensive management tool developed by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to help conserve and enhance the state's full array of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Crafted by our state leaders in research, conservation and education, the Wildlife Action Plan identifies diverse management strategies, research studies and conservation efforts to ensure that all of our wildlife resources have a healthy place to call home.



saw-whet owl

Since the Wildlife Commission was created 60 years ago to protect and manage hunting and fishing resources, North Carolina has seen its wild turkey populations restored, anadromous striped bass populations stabilized, the return of bald eagles to the skies and more than 2 million acres of wildlife habitat conserved. The Wildlife Action Plan represents the commission's latest—and most innovative—effort to serve as a responsible steward of our state's wildlife resources.

The Wildlife Action Plan builds on historical conservation efforts and is strengthened by concurrent conservation strategies being implemented by other states across the nation. The plan provides a cost-effective, proactive approach to the conservation of entire wildlife communities, including those fish and wildlife species for which management was traditionally under-funded.

It is an ambitious plan, whose success will not be measured by population estimates or growth rates, but by the cultivation of lasting conservation partnerships and by the promise of fish and wildlife resources for future North Carolinians.



A STRATEGIC MANDATE

In 2001, North Carolina became part of a national initiative to conserve and protect wild animals and the habitats they need to thrive. This initiative, enacted by the U.S. Congress and known as the State Wildlife Grants Program, recognized that our nation's wildlife was at risk and mandated that each state develop a strategy to protect its natural resources. Over the next four years, the Wildlife Commission partnered with more than 50 state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation groups, universities, private companies and individuals to develop our Wildlife Action Plan.

North Carolina proved to be a leader in this national effort. We were the first state to submit a completed Wildlife Action Plan in fall 2005, which was ranked in the top 12 nationally by an outside panel. With continued support and cooperation, North Carolina will maintain its leadership role, as we implement the Wildlife Action Plan.

This is a formidable task. Fortunately, we have many partners committed to keeping North Carolina wild. Our federal partners include the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. State agencies such as the Division of Water Quality, the Division of Parks and Recreation, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the Natural Heritage Program as well as many state universities also provide active support.

The N.C. Teaming with Wildlife Coalition is composed of citizen organizations that support legislative efforts to bolster the Wildlife Action Plan. To date, this coalition has more than 125 member groups, including the N. C. Wildlife Federation, Audubon N.C. and The Nature Conservancy.

“When you put your hand in a flowing stream, you touch the last that has gone before and the first of what is still to come.” –Leonardo da Vinci

keep common animals **COMMON**

This principle guides the vision of the Wildlife Action Plan.



rose-
breasted
grosbeak

North Carolina is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, and recently, an increasing human population. As construction of human habitats soars, natural habitats lose ground. As people continue to move to the state, we must balance human and wildlife needs. The biggest threats to wildlife are the loss and degradation of habitat. Animals need safe places to live, gather food and raise their young. Only through proactive strategies, like those outlined in the Wildlife Action Plan, can we keep animals from becoming threatened, endangered or extinct.

While habitat conservation efforts directly benefit wildlife, protecting habitat for animals doesn't just benefit wildlife. It's good for people too!

benefits of conservation

HEALTH BENEFITS: Pollutants in the environment pose a threat to wildlife AND people. Our drinking water comes from rivers and underground wells. Clean air and water for wildlife also mean a healthy place for people to live.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Protecting natural resources has economic benefits. Every year thousands of people visit our state. Whether enjoying our beautiful coastal beaches, bird watching in the mountains, or hiking along a river trail, these visitors are supporting local businesses. In 2005, tourists spent \$14 billion in North Carolina. One-quarter of these visitors came to North Carolina specifically to enjoy our natural resources.

PROTECTION FROM SEVERE WEATHER: Natural landscapes where animals live can protect people from Mother Nature's fury. Marshes, barrier islands, and vegetation along stream banks can lessen the damage done by hurricanes and floods.



FISH AND WILDLIFE FOR FUTURE NORTH CAROLINIANS: Protecting animals and their homes ensures that we leave a rich, natural heritage to enchant and inspire generations to come. Shared memories of family camping trips, hikes to waterfalls, and visions of peregrine falcons flying over green valleys are legacies we can leave to our children.



ravine salamander

the Carolina way to **CONSERVE WILDLIFE**

The State Wildlife Grants Program mandates that the Wildlife Action Plan focus on species of highest conservation need. To identify these animals, the Wildlife Commission works closely with expert biologists statewide.

These biologists identified 371 priority species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mollusks and crustaceans in need of protection. Some are already endangered. However, if priority species can be conserved before they become endangered, the Wildlife Action Plan will have accomplished one of its primary goals—to save money by conserving fish and wildlife before they require more costly measures of protection.

The Wildlife Action Plan also assesses the 23 habitat types and the 17 river basins found in the state. By matching priority species to each habitat type and river basin, scientists can evaluate and recommend specific conservation actions. This is the strategic framework underlying the Wildlife Action Plan.



pine barrens tree frog

goals

OF THE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

1. Improve our understanding of species diversity and enhance our ability to make conservation or management decisions.
2. Conserve and enhance habitats and the communities they support.
3. Foster partnerships and cooperative efforts among natural resource agencies, organizations, academia and private industry.
4. Promote outreach to citizens and conservation stakeholders.
5. Sustain and improve existing regulations and programs aimed at conserving habitats and communities.

By working together with the citizens of North Carolina to achieve these goals, we can ensure the continued survival of our state's wildlife resources.

strategies

TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

Urban Wildlife Management

Much of the state is being rapidly developed to accommodate our growing population. With proactive cooperation and planning, our urban areas can be friendly to wildlife. Green space within cities is a popular place for recreation and exercise, and serves as a haven for animals such as migrating birds. By working with city councils and development boards, we can incorporate wildlife habitat into parks and walking trails. Additional efforts can ensure streams and rivers running through cities are clean. Conservation design principles can be followed when developing suburbs, golf courses and shopping centers.

Private Lands Management

Working with private landowners presents an important conservation opportunity. Many people enjoy hosting wildlife on their property and are willing to learn more about land-management practices that benefit wildlife. For example, Weyerhaeuser, a forest products company, is an important partner with the Wildlife Commission and actively incorporates wildlife conservation principles in its timber-harvesting plans. The Landowner Incentive, Safe Harbor and Cooperative Upland-habitat Restoration and Enhancement Programs, and the Farm Bill provide technical guidance and financial assistance to promote conservation on private lands.

Land Conservation

Directly purchasing the land that animals require is a crucial conservation tool. However, it is also costly and limited by land availability. The Commission works with the Natural Heritage Program, Clean Water Management and N.C. Farmland Preservation trust funds to identify, purchase and manage land acquisitions throughout the state. The Wildlife Action Plan is a useful tool for identifying lands that include important habitats that benefit priority species. Acquired land may be managed for wildlife, including important game animals such as deer, turkey and quail. This ensures future opportunities for hunting, fishing, recreation and research.

Education, Outreach and Recreation

North Carolinians are eager to learn about our state's unique wildlife resources. Successful conservation education helps provide adults and children with a connection to the wonders of the natural world around them. The Commission operates four education centers to provide classes for fish and wildlife enthusiasts of all ages. Project WILD offers teachers wildlife education workshops and activities to incorporate into their curricula. Providing access to forests, rivers and beaches for photography, paddling, bird watching and hiking is another important way to promote citizen conservation.

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

—John Muir



achievements of the **WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN**

The Wildlife Commission works on many projects that directly benefit wildlife communities. Here are a few examples of key conservation work supported by the State Wildlife Grants Program.



FINS Aquatic biologists monitor freshwater mussels, snails, crayfish and fish throughout North Carolina. By working with hydropower companies, commission biologists are helping restore habitat on the Yadkin-PeeDee, Catawba and Little Tennessee rivers to improve conditions for fish and mussels. Mussels are important contributors to stream health—by filtering sediments and pollutants, they help keep our waters clear and clean. The Wildlife Commission is also a member of the multi-state Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee, which works to protect this imperiled fish. Successful partnerships have resulted in the reintroduction of four minnow species and gilt darters into portions of the Pigeon River, once too polluted to support healthy fish communities.

SCALES North Carolina now boasts a state chapter of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. This national initiative promotes conservation of reptiles and amphibians through innovative cooperation among state and federal agencies, corporations, academic institutions, environmental education groups, land trusts, conservation organizations and the pet trade industry. Commission biologists also conduct population assessments of rare bog turtles and green salamanders, and protect coastal areas that provide nesting sites for sea turtles.



WINGS Bird biologists assess populations of terns, pelicans and egrets living on 21 islands along the coast. These islands serve as important nesting habitat for more than 20,000 pairs of nesting waterbirds. Biologists also monitor beach nesters, such as black skimmers and common terns, to gather information that could keep these birds off of the Endangered Species List. As part of multi-state, multi-agency working groups, biologists work to conserve yellow-bellied sapsuckers, painted buntings, golden-winged warblers and cerulean warblers.

a North Carolina conservation success story

THE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN strives to conserve unique and increasingly rare habitats such as the North Carolina Sandhills—home of **longleaf pine forests**. Once widespread in the coastal plain, this forest type now exists in only three percent of its previous range. Longleaf pine forests and savannas are home to many birds, reptiles and mammals. However, one of the animals most affected by loss of this habitat is the **red-cockaded woodpecker**, a bird that drills cavities in living longleaf pines for family nest sites.

Because only some of the remaining longleaf pine forests are on state land, successful protection and restoration of these woodpeckers depend on bringing together the state, private landowners and interest groups. Enter the **N.C. Sandhills Conservation Partnership**. This groundbreaking collaborative effort was developed in 2000 to conserve longleaf pine habitat, which supports red-cockaded woodpecker populations.

Together these partners have protected a network of more than **12,000 acres** of land near Fort Bragg that includes longleaf pine forest for more than 450 nesting woodpecker family groups. In addition to the woodpeckers, 250 bird, 67 mammal, and 83 reptile and amphibian species can be found in the North Carolina Sandhills.

The Sandhills Partnership is an excellent example of how different groups can work together to protect habitats for priority species. In fact, this partnership serves as a model for other groups, such as the Onslow Bight Conservation Forum, the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaborative and the Greater Uwharries Conservation Partnership, that address **local conservation needs**.



red-cockaded woodpecker

The N.C. Sandhills Conservation Partnership is run by a committee of the following partners:

- N.C. Department of Parks and Recreation
- N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Sandhills Area Land Trust
- Sandhills Ecological Institute
- The Nature Conservancy
- U.S. Army Environmental Center
- U.S. Army at Fort Bragg
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

how you can be part of the **WILDLIFE ACTION!**

NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS

Use it to identify priority survey, research, monitoring, and conservation needs in habitats and river basins across the state, to get an overview of species and habitat monitoring efforts going on in the state, and as a source of ideas for partnerships and cooperative projects.

Rafinesque's big-eared bat



PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

Use it to identify important habitats, fish and wildlife that can be conserved. Learn about technical and financial support for land-management practices.



mottled sculpin

LET THE **WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN** WORK FOR YOU



brown pelican

INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

Use it to identify survey, research, monitoring and conservation needs on the lands or river basins where your company operates, and as a guide to help make your business a leader in conservation efforts.



American alligator

LAWMAKERS

Use it to learn about the conservation priorities statewide, and to identify legislative opportunities that promote a clean environment for North Carolina.

TEACHERS

Use it to guide classroom activities that incorporate local conservation needs, and as a source of information and inspiration for students interested in wildlife resources management.

Learn more about the **WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN**, how it is used to conserve our shared natural wildlife resources, and how you can be part of the action too. A full copy of the Wildlife Action Plan can be ordered on CD or downloaded from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Web site at www.ncwildlife.org.

**Be a BACKYARD
CONSERVATIONIST**

- Plant a wildflower garden to attract birds and butterflies.
- Minimize herbicide and insecticide use – they can be toxic to wildlife.
- Use native plants to landscape for wildlife.
- Hang bird and bat houses to help control pests naturally.
- Protect water quality by planting native vegetation around ponds and creeks.
- Do not litter.

**Be a COMMUNITY
CONSERVATIONIST**

- Protect natural areas where you live.
- Promote the creation of wildlife parks in your neighborhood.
- Support environmental legislation that helps local and state wildlife.
- Become part of the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition.



be a financial supporter of **CONSERVATION EFFORTS** in North Carolina



Check for Wildlife on your next state tax form. On line 26, simply enter the amount that you would like to contribute from your refund. Your donation will support programs that conserve wildlife.

Purchase a **license plate** that supports wildlife conservation. The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles has partnered with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to offer license plates that feature the state bird and tree. Request it at your Division of Motor Vehicles office, or apply online at www.ncwildlife.org (under the N.C. Wild Store link).

Direct contributions can be made to the **Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund**. This fund is solely dependent upon contributions from citizens committed to keeping North Carolina wild. Please send checks or money orders to the "Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund" at the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, 1722 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1722.

Subscribe to **Wildlife in North Carolina**, a monthly magazine, to learn about our state's unique wildlife. Call 1-866-945-3746 for more information, or subscribe online at www.ncwildlife.org (under the N.C. Wild Store link). Every issue includes a young readers' section!



Contact the **N.C. Teaming with Wildlife** office (704-332-5696) to find out more about groups in your area that support local conservation efforts and the Wildlife Action Plan.

The **North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission** protects and conserves the state's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species and their habitats, ensuring present and future generations will be able to enjoy North Carolina's natural splendor.



**N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Wildlife Diversity Program**

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