

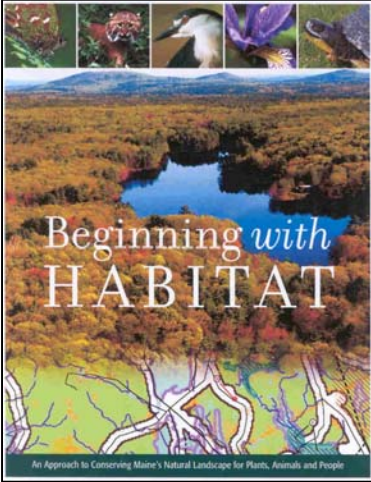


Maine's State Wildlife Grant Program



Congress created the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program in 2001 to help state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies address the unmet needs of fish and wildlife and associated habitats, especially species of greatest conservation need. Funds appropriated under the State Wildlife Grants program are allocated to states according to a formula that takes into account each state's size and population. To date, Maine has received nearly \$2.5 million in SWG funds. Here are several examples of projects that State Wildlife Grant monies support.

◆ **Beginning with Habitat**



Beginning with Habitat is a cooperative effort of agencies and organizations working together to secure Maine's outdoor legacy. The goal of the program is to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine by providing each Maine town with a collection of maps and accompanying information depicting and describing various habitats of statewide and national significance in the town. *Beginning with Habitat* partners can then work with communities to design a landscape that accommodates the growth they need with the highest resource conservation.



◆ **Seabird Outreach**

The principal objective of this project is to inform Maine students and the general public about seabird biology and marine conservation by providing insight into the lives of Maine seabirds (puffins and terns) through a web-based school curriculum and Internet access that features live-streaming video from Eastern Egg Rock, a state-owned 7-acre sanctuary managed by National Audubon Society.



◆ **Distribution & Ecology of Purple Sandpipers Wintering in Maine**

The northeast Atlantic coast is recognized by the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Council as an area that is extremely important to the survival of wintering purple sandpipers in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, there is strong evidence that Maine supports a large percentage of the wintering population. With threats from catastrophic oil spills and consequent damage to shorebird habitats or shorebirds themselves, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has identified the need to locate and map important purple sandpiper habitats and determine population abundance, distribution, and limiting factors. This project will enable the Department to 1) estimate abundance and distribution of purple sandpipers in Maine; 2) assess movements and site fidelity of individuals at particular sites; and 3) develop a protocol for monitoring purple sandpiper populations in Maine.

◆ **Bald Eagle Survey and Essential Habitat**



Bald eagles continue their dramatic comeback in Maine. Presently, the State is home to more than 300 nesting pairs, a remarkable 10-fold increase from the 30 nesting pairs reported in the late-1970s. Despite this accomplishment, our ultimate challenge is to provide suitable habitat for eagles in the future. Nesting eagles need mature trees and wooded buffers in shorelands, a niche that will always be at risk to land development and recreational pressures. The purpose of this project is to devise statewide strategies and identify optimal sites for long-term conservation of bald eagle nesting habitat as the fundamental safeguard for a lasting recovery of the species in Maine. This “safety net” concept is the last pending objective for state reclassification of bald eagles from the current status of Threatened.

◆ **Enhance Management of Piping Plovers and Least Terns**



Piping plovers and least terns are designated as endangered species in Maine and are known to nest on a handful of beaches in the State. To successfully raise young, these birds need sand beaches free from human disturbance and predators. This project will enable MDIFW, working in



cooperation with the Maine Audubon Society, to conduct the planning and data gathering necessary to enhance the management of piping plovers and least terns, including the development of cooperative beach management agreements with Maine municipalities.

◆ **Aroostook Hills and Lowlands Inventory**

Since 1997, MDIFW and the Maine Natural Areas Program have been working on a systematic, statewide, 10-year survey of rare and endangered wildlife, plants, and natural communities. This survey is designed to document new locations of rare species to better assess their status and distribution and design conservation strategies to promote their recovery. The objective of this project is to conduct a wildlife inventory of the Aroostook Hills and Lowlands ecoregions (~2.5 million acres) in northern Maine. The inventory will focus on high value habitats supporting rare, threatened and endangered animals and high value habitat. Data gathered will support voluntary land protection by large and small private landowners.

◆ **Canada Lynx Ecology**



The Canada lynx has long been a rare carnivore in northern and western Maine. Until recently, its status was largely unknown and was based on anecdotal reports or a track in the snow. SWG funds help support an ongoing study of Canada lynx in Maine to 1) determine if there is a viable, self-supporting population of lynx in the State; 2) document mortality factors affecting lynx; 3) identify habitats used by lynx and how they relate to snowshoe hare distribution and abundance; 4) investigate how lynx distribution in Maine is affected by populations of bobcats, coyotes, fishers, and fox; and 5) test the efficacy of various survey methods used to determine status of lynx.

◆ **Stream Survey Databasing/Utilization of Restored Aquatic Habitats**

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is enhancing its efforts towards managing and conserving flowing water habitats and their respective animal communities. Although the Department currently holds extensive survey information regarding these ecosystems, most data exists in a multitude of formats and physical locations. This project will compile existing stream habitat and fish community data into a computerized Geographic Information System (GIS) database for easier use, analysis, and visualization within landscapes.



◆ **Lake Habitat Inventories**



One of the primary responsibilities of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is to conduct habitat surveys of the aquatic resources in the State. These surveys include gathering data related to water quality, fish species composition and relative abundance, bathymetry, aquatic habitat types, and macroinvertebrate species composition. These surveys are important to present and future management of Maine's lakes and ponds. To date, there are roughly 3,800 ponds that have never been inventoried by MDIFW staff and many that have been completed need to be updated. The purpose of this project is to utilize various fisheries techniques to collect data to properly plan for the future management of lacustrine habitat in Maine.

◆ **Aquatic Biodiversity Project**

Effective resource management depends on ready access to existing data resources and on the ability to design and implement future data collection efforts in a rational and cost effective manner. This project will enable the Department to ensure that all priority freshwater fisheries data are in a format that will permit electronic mapping and analyses of this information.

◆ **Estimating Moose Density**

Moose are one of the most sought after species for viewing, and moose viewing is important to the tourism industry of Maine. Accurate assessments of the moose population are needed to meet the moose management goals of maximizing hunting opportunity, to the extent possible, while maintaining high numbers of mature bulls to provide high quality viewing. The principal objective of this project is to develop an accurate and cost-effective model that can be used to estimate the density of Maine's moose population.



◆ **Unique Aquatic Ecosystems**

Fishless Ponds are believed to be rare in the Maine landscape. Many of these ponds occur in mountainous terrain where fish access is limited because of local topography. These sites have sometimes been targeted for introductions of sport fish, but they may have unique ecological attributes, especially for invertebrates and amphibians. Introduction of predatory fish could permanently alter their ecology. The objective of this study is to document the ecology of fishless ponds in Maine and conduct a landscape analysis to predict and evaluate the presence of these potentially unique natural communities.

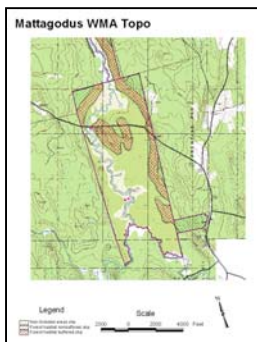
- ◆ **Wildlife Park Displays**

The Maine Wildlife Park receives more than 80,000 visitors annually, including a large number of school children on field trips. These visitors come to the park to learn more about Maine's fish and wildlife resources and management. This project will enable the Department to construct a new fisheries display and to complete educational exhibits for moose, deer, coyote, turkeys, and turtles.

- ◆ **Fish and Wildlife Education**

This project will provide educational materials to every fourth grade classroom in the State to increase students' awareness and understanding of fish and wildlife resources. The materials will consist of posters, activity guides for teachers, animal and fish guides, and management reports.

- ◆ **Wildlife Management Areas, Planning and Habitat Management for the Future**



Two-thirds of MDIFW's 52 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) contain habitats that support federal or state-listed threatened or endangered wildlife, species of special concern, and species identified of greatest conservation need or contain special habitats or communities. The purpose of this project is to develop and populate a statewide WMA database, update WMA management plans, develop a WMA schedule of development and maintenance treatments, and implement a schedule of habitat treatments across all Wildlife Management Areas to benefit a diversity of featured wildlife species and species of greatest conservation need.

- ◆ **An Investigation of Blanding's Turtle Road Mortality**

There is increasing emphasis on the part of federal and state transportation authorities to minimize and mitigate impacts to wildlife passage and mortality from road construction projects. This project will help the Maine Departments of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Transportation identify the location and extent of road impacts on endangered turtles in Maine as a precursor towards designing strategic mitigation measures.



- ◆ **Status and Monitoring of Maine Owls**

In 2001, MDIFW began working with Maine Audubon to evaluate the abundance and distribution of owls in Maine and to develop a volunteer-based monitoring system. Both Partners in Flight and recent initiatives directed at integrated bird conservation have identified monitoring of nocturnal birds as a high priority research and management need in the northeast.

For more information on Maine's State Wildlife Grant Program contact:

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