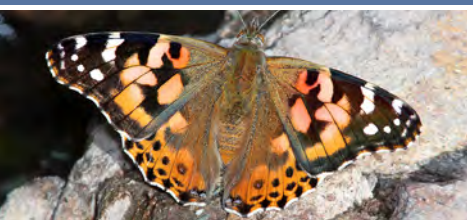
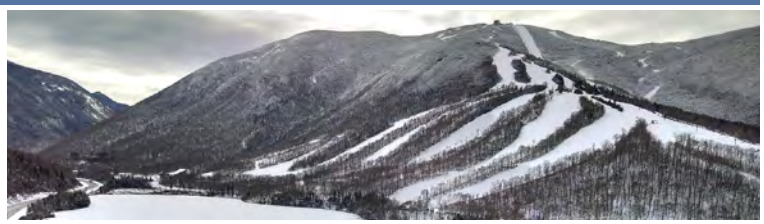
WILDLINES

New Hampshire Fish and Game's quarterly newsletter of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program





WINTER 2021

NH MOOSE PLATES

Help Nongame Program Reach Project Milestones

New Hampshire Fish and Game biologists raised and released 692 state endangered Karner blue butterflies from the Nongame Program's captive rearing facility in Concord last summer. The Granite State's Karner blue population is now estimated to be 3,000 adults, an astonishing number considering that this delicate insect was extirpated from the state just two decades ago. The Karner blue project, along with 20 other wildlife restoration and education endeavors, was supported in part by the New Hampshire Conservation and Heritage License Plate Program, New Hampshire's official conservation license plate. All funds raised through the purchase of Moose Plates go directly to projects that support the preservation and heritage of New Hampshire's way of life.

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A typical year of Karner blue butterfly conservation in New Hampshire includes two rounds of captive rearing. For the first time since rearing efforts began in 2001, the second round of captive rearing and releasing was postponed. "We figured that with releasing such a large number of first brood offspring, the adults would lay enough eggs in the wild for us to not need to rear a second brood in the lab," said NH Fish and Game Biological Aide, Heather Siart.

Many variables influence the success of Karners, including the extreme summer drought conditions experienced in the Concord area during 2020. Biologists remain poised to alter conservation measures as necessary as the region works toward the federal recovery goals for this specialized species. 2020's raw data suggest that this year's Karner blue butterfly population remains stable, however further analysis will continue into next year.

"Not having a second brood in the lab also gave us the opportunity to see what was happening in the wild and focus on habitat work," said Siart. Conservation License Plate funding helped cover the cost of the transference of 500 lupine plants, the Karner blue caterpillar's food source, into the Concord Pine Barrens conservation area. Residents can purchase a Moose Plate at any time from their city or town office. Moose Plates can also be combined with vanity plates or state park plates. Learn more at ***mooseplate.com***.

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Donate online at ***wildnh.com/nongame***

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WILDLINES

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WILDLINES is funded in part through the sale of Conservation License Plates.
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SPOTLIGHT

ON SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

(*Ammodramus savannarum*)

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Named for its grasshopper-like high-pitched buzzy song, this grassland bird is listed as a threatened species in New Hampshire. A small-sized sparrow streaked with brown and gold tones and a short tail, the grasshopper sparrow is a ground forager and stays hidden most of the year. During the breeding season, males may be seen singing from exposed perches.

Habitat and Distribution: Grasslands. Population declines have continued since the 1960s, and grasshopper sparrows are now typically found at just 5-6 sites in southern New Hampshire.

Threats:

- Reduction of grassland habitat, particularly at airports.
- Mowing and other vehicle use in occupied grasslands during nesting season.
- Disturbance of nest sites from increased recreational activity including from walkers, dogs, and bicyclists.

Conservation Actions:

- Continued cooperative management of the state's grasslands, particularly enacting precautions during the nesting season through the timing and method of mowing.
- Surveys and monitoring for all grassland bird species. Any reports can be documented at ***ebird.org***.

BICKNELL'S THR

on Cannon Mountain

Cannon Mountain is renowned for skiing, climbing, and the venerable Old Man of the Mountain. It also provides critical breeding habitat for Bicknell's thrush, an insect-eating bird that breeds in high-elevation spruce-fir forests. Declines have continued in the White Mountains, which constitutes 30% of the bird's global habitat. NH Audubon Biologist Dr. Pamela Hunt led this year's annual survey for Bicknell's thrush at 11 mapped "points" in two areas of Cannon Mountain. The surveyors are

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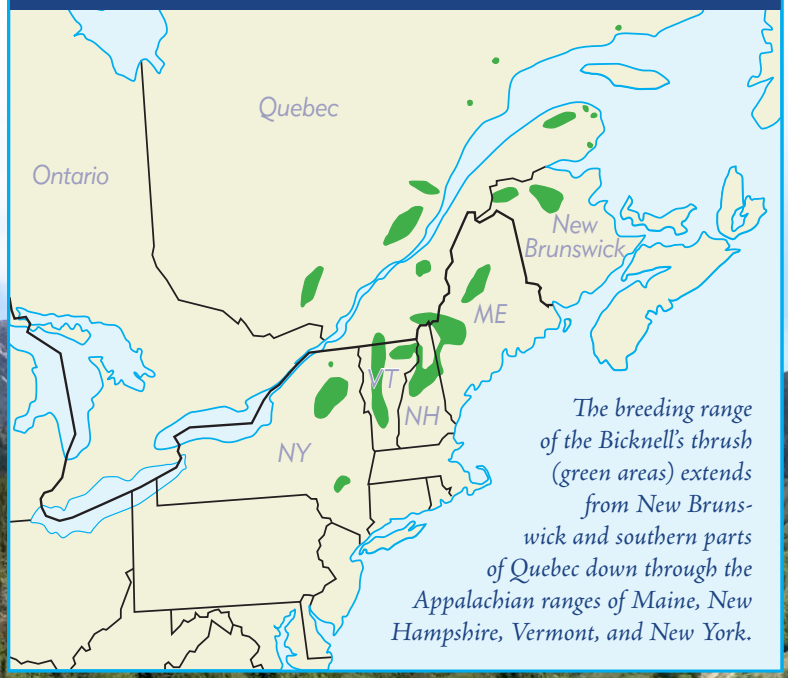
Left: Typical Bicknell's thrush habitat. Above: New Hampshire Fish and Game's Nongame Program Coordinator Mike Marchand assists in conducting the 2020 Bicknell's thrush survey on Cannon Mountain.

Breeding Range of the Bicknell's Thrush



The breeding range of the Bicknell's thrush (green areas) extends from New Brunswick and southern parts of Quebec down through the Appalachian ranges of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York.

RUSH

grateful to the Cannon Mountain staff, who provided invaluable logistical aid in support of the annual Bicknell's thrush surveys.

All birds observed are recorded during a 20-minute count at each point because there are other species of conservation concern using similar habitat. In 2020, seven Bicknell's thrush were documented during the survey, which reflects the average for the last six years.

"Thirty-nine species have now been recorded over the course of these surveys, although only ten have have been recorded in a single year," said Hunt. Survey protocols were adopted from the Mountain Bird Working Group, which also maintains a list of focal species. Of ten focal high-elevation bird species, two set new records during surveys in 2020; eight yellow-bellied flycatchers and seven blackpoll warblers were recorded, the highest numbers for each species in this decade of surveys.

New Hampshire biologists and forest managers continue to work together to conserve high-elevation ecosystems. The largest and most immediate threat to Bicknell's thrush is the clearing and burning of wintering habitat in the Caribbean, followed by the predicted loss of breeding habitat as a result of climate change. To learn more about this species of greatest conservation need, read the *NH Wildlife Action Plan* Bicknell's thrush profile at ***www.wildnh.com/wildlife/profiles/wap/birds-bicknellsthrush.pdf***.

Two species of northern high-elevation birds set new records for this decade of surveys on Cannon Mountain: the yellow-bellied flycatcher (left) and the blackpoll warbler (right). These surveys, led by NH Audubon, aim to track the Bicknell's thrush population on the mountain over time.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MEMORIAL GIFTS

to New Hampshire Fish and Game's

Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program

Donating a gift of conservation in memory of a loved one is a purposeful, lasting way to both honor them and help preserve the mission of protecting New Hampshire's wild places. The NH Fish and Game Department recognizes with gratitude the following individuals, their families, and their friends for helping to leave behind a conservation legacy for future generations:

- ***Steven Paul Sweeney*** of Twin Mountain was a family man who passed down his love of nature and the outdoors to his grandchildren. Described as an avid outdoorsman, he summited all 67 of New England's 4,000-foot mountains.
- ***Robin Normandeau***, the wife of former NH Fish and Game Director Glenn Normandeau, grew up in Rye Beach before later moving to Portsmouth and always maintained ties to the ocean. To honor her memory, Robin's family and many friends had memorial trees planted in a national forest.
- ***Timothy J. Merrill*** was an avid hunter and spent most of his life in Farmington and Milton, NH. Family and friends remember him as a charitable man who could identify any tree or wildlife track.
- ***Steven Francis Petroski*** of Pelham was a family man who loved everything about the outdoors. He spent time hunting and fishing and went on incredible trips to Alaska. He was also a former member of the Pelham Fish and Game Club.

WINTER
Wildlife Almanac

JANUARY

• The bright red berries of the common winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) are eaten by various wintering birds including eastern bluebirds, American robins, and cedar waxwings.

FEBRUARY

• Owls may be heard calling as they choose mates and defend territories. While great horned owls may already be incubating eggs this month, barred owls are just beginning their breeding season.

MARCH

• Squirrels are searching maple trees for oozing sap, which is produced during spring thawing and refreezing cycles, creating the right conditions for sap production.

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Many pollinators are in a state of dormancy, overwintering as an egg, caterpillar, or chrysalis either underground, in tree cavities, or inside hollow stems. The adult eastern comma butterfly is one exception, secreting chemicals that act as an antifreeze to preserve its tissues. Some pollinators migrate to warmer climates, such as the monarch and the painted lady butterfly.

Eastern comma butterfly

Most insect pollinators only live a few days to weeks as adults, but during this time they perform one of the world's most important jobs. Today there are many threats to our bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, and wasps which are all critical species that support our food supply and ecosystems. Any landowner or land manager interested in implementing actions on their property to conserve pollinators can utilize a new brochure created by the Taking Action for Wildlife team. Learn about what pollinators need and how you can help by downloading the brochure at ***extension.unh.edu/resource/pollinators-new-hampshire-brochure***.

Communities Dive into Conservation Projects

Coordinated by the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension and NH Fish and Game's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program and facilitated by the Taking Action for Wildlife team, six New Hampshire towns, Amherst, Atkinson, Candia, Durham, Claremont, and Thornton, are participating in the first official Community Conservation Cohort. These six communities previously completed a town natural resource inventory, the first step in prioritized conservation planning. Poised for the next step in implementing conservation actions, these six groups applied to the cohort to learn from each other and the natural resources professionals who will help guide them through larger wildlife and habitat projects. Online workshops will continue through the winter as each town plans their on-the-ground projects as a group. For continued support, each town is also paired with a staff member from the Taking Action for Wildlife Team. To date the workshops have included round-table discussions and a conservation guest panel. This round of advanced trainings generated lots of interest and will likely be offered again. Read more at *takingactionforwildlife.org*.

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