

Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies REGIONAL CONSERVATION NEEDS

RCN Grant Spotlight

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Eastern small-footed bat by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region - Flickr

Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN)

The RSGCN list is a charge of the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee (NEF-WDTC) and focuses attention on species with high conservation need.

It has served to:

- Prioritize conservation investments
- Communicate conservation needs
- Improve conservation outcomes through proactive regional conservation

Regional Species of Greatest Conserva-

tion Need receive a higher level of conservation attention as evidenced by the significant amount of RCN and Competitive SWG funding, in addition to state and partner investments.

Maintaining the list facilitates coordination as regional partners

including states, the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, The Nature Conservancy, the Northeast Climate Science Center, and the US Fish and Wildlife

About \$5 million of RCN and Competitive SWG money were invested in species that were high priority on the 1999 RSGCN list.

Services' Endangered Species Program share information about species of concern.

In the last decade, strong research and implementation working groups have been formed in support of two RSGCN species, New England Cottontail and Wood Turtle. For New England Cottontail, the research and conservation investments along with the commitments of multiple partners resulted in an endangered species determination of "listing not warranted."

For Wood Turtle, the research and conservation investments along with the commitments of multiple partners resulted in an endangered species determination of "listing not warranted."

Outcomes for RSGCN

- ▶ **Bats (RSGCN since 1999)** When white nose syndrome was first discovered in NY in 2006, RCN and Competitive SWG funds were put to work immediately. Unfortunately, the disease has become as widespread and devastating as originally feared and no viable treatment for wild populations has been developed.
- ▶ **New England Cottontail (RSGCN since 1999)** Strong regional coordination will support habitat restoration for this species and led in part to a determination that federal listing was not warranted.
- ▶ **Wood Turtle (RSGCN since 1999)** Populations are declining due to habitat loss, fragmentation, illegal collection and other threats. A strong working group is in place to develop conservation plans to protect this species in the Northeast.
- ▶ **Brook Floater Mussel (RSGCN since 2013)**. States throughout the region have a high concern about this species and eagerly await results of an RCN-funded project.

History of Evaluation Process

1980's: States shared lists of species of concern and information about the species.

1999: The NEFWDTTC evaluated 106 species and suggested 26 warranted federal listing consideration based on four factors:

Risk: declining populations or high risk of disappearing from the Northeast

Data: lack of data with suspicion of risk of disappearing from the region

Area: the Northeast comprises a significant portion of the species' global range.

Special Cases: e.g. collecting pressure, taxonomic uncertainty, intensive management needed, etc.

2010: The Northeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) developed a prioritization method based on State Wildlife Action Plan Species of Greatest Conservation Need and species' ranges.

Conservation Need: the percent of states in the Northeast that identified the species as SGCN in 2005 SWAPs.

Regional Responsibility: the portion of the species' North American range in the Northeast (estimated by taxa experts)

2013: The NEFWDTTC worked with the North Atlantic LCC to extend the NEPARC method to all taxa and update the RSGCN list.

2016: State Wildlife Action Plans, revised in 2015, provide the most recent review of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The NEFWDTTC is preparing to update the RSGCN list, with three objectives:

Species of Conservation Need: to rank the most imperiled species that our region has responsibility for protecting

Data Deficient: to identify understudied taxa with potential conservation concern

Stronghold Species: to identify species that are imperiled outside the northeast region but have relatively strong populations in the Northeast

1999 RSGCN needing early evaluation

Reptiles

- Wood Turtle
- N. Diamond-backed Terrapin
- Eastern Massasauga
- Blanding's Turtle

Mammals

- W. VA water shrew
- S. Rock Vole
- Southeastern Myotis
- N. Bog Lemming
- New England Cottontail
- Harbor Porpoise
- E. Small-footed Bat

Invertebrates

- Snuffbox
- Green Floater

Fish

- Tippecanoe Darter
- Spotted Darter
- Lake Sturgeon
- Gravel Chub
- Gilt Darter
- E. Sand Darter
- Bluebreast Darter

Birds

- Loggerhead Shrike
- Harlequin Duck
- Bicknell's Thrush

Amphibians

- E. Hellbender



The Regional Conservation Needs Grant Program

The Northeast Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) grant program is one of the largest multi-jurisdictional collaboratives in the United States to effectively address critical landscape-scale wildlife conservation needs. Since 2007, wildlife diversity program managers from the state fish and wildlife agencies of the 13 states (from Virginia to Maine) and the District of Columbia have worked together to meet their common conservation needs by combining funds, matching those resources with partner funds, and prioritizing actions identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. The program funds projects that improve our understanding of regional species and habitats of greatest conservation need and make recommendations for strategies to ensure sustained populations of these species and their biological communities. To learn more about our funded projects or to get information about upcoming grant cycles, please visit the website www.rcngrants.org.

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