

Asheville

Ecological Services Field Office

photo: John Fletcher ©



photo: USFWS



photo: Richard G. Biggins



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Photos (top to bottom)

Southern Appalachian habitat.

Quality Southeastern aquatic habitat.

Endangered aquatic mollusk.

Station Facts

- Established: 1977.
- Staff: 16.

Fish and Wildlife Service Mission

To provide Federal leadership for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. Migratory birds, endangered species, interjurisdictional fisheries, and certain marine mammals are the Service's primary responsibility.

Station Goals

- Implement listing, recovery and permit activities for federally listed endangered and threatened species and species of concern in North Carolina, and some species in South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. Conserve and restore the ecosystems these species depend on.
- Restore habitat in priority streams and wetlands that support a high diversity of trust resources.
- Recover federally endangered and threatened fish and aquatic mollusk species in the Ohio River and Atlantic slope drainages in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.
- Reduce impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats in western North Carolina that can result from federally funded or authorized projects.
- Conduct education and outreach activities in support of fish and wildlife conservation.

Services Provided To

- Private citizens.
- Federal and state agencies seeking approval on federally funded activities that may impact federally listed species, wetlands, migratory birds and other trust resources.
- Federal and state agencies and tribal governments seeking to conserve funding for listing and recovery activities for federally endangered and threatened species and species of concern.
- Local governments, community groups, and schools.
- Other Fish and Wildlife Service offices.

Activity Highlights

- Coordinate grants-in-aid under the Endangered Species Act with state agencies in North Carolina to assist with endangered species recovery projects.
- Work with partners to identify, develop, and implement measures to control nonnative invasive pest species.
- Initiate and fund, with partners, innovative research that assists the recovery of federally endangered and threatened mussel, fish and other aquatic species.
- Coordinate the restoration of globally endangered plants to their native habitats.
- Coordinate endangered bat recovery efforts in the Southeast, and assist other agencies with bat recovery projects nationwide.
- Review federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects annually for impacts to fish and wildlife resources in western North Carolina.
- Coordinate education and outreach programs for trust resources with partners and other Service offices.

Questions and Answers

Is extinction a normal process?

Extinction is a normal process that has been occurring since long before the appearance of man. New species normally develop at about the same rate that other species become extinct. However, because of air and water pollution, loss of habitat, and other human-induced environmental changes, extinctions are now occurring at a pace that far exceeds the natural extinction rate. Since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock almost 400 years ago, more than 500 North American species have become extinct. That is more than one species lost each year on this continent. Scientists estimate the natural extinction rate to be one species lost every 100 years worldwide.

Why is it important to protect and conserve all species?

The loss of a single species may not result in obvious environmental repercussions; however, all life on earth is interconnected. If enough "living connections" are broken, whole ecosystems could fail, and our own survival could be jeopardized. When a species is lost, the benefits it may have provided are gone forever. Wild species can provide us with life-saving medicines; remember penicillin was discovered from a species of mold and has saved millions of lives. Furthermore, declining plant and animal species are warning signs of environmental problems that can affect us, our health and our economy. Natural resource conservation is also about economics. We cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy environment.

Can endangered species and forest management coexist?

A common misconception is that all endangered species are inhabitants of wilderness. In fact, many are dependent on young forests and thrive after forest management activities such as clearcutting, thinning, and prescribed burning. Forest management is neither inherently good nor bad; different management techniques simply result in different habitat conditions, benefiting species particularly adapted to that habitat type. In addition, water quality and aquatic species will not be adversely affected by forest management if proper management practices are followed to control soil erosion.

Are development projects stopped when endangered species are found?

The Asheville Field Office reviews hundreds of federally funded or permitted projects each year, none of which have ever been stopped. If a project might impact a federally protected species or rare habitat, Service biologists work closely with the agency that is coordinating the project, making recommendations that will minimize impacts to listed species or their habitats while allowing the project to proceed.