

Wildlife

INTRODUCTION



2015 Wildlife Station

Along with aquatics, forestry and soils, wildlife is another of our valuable natural resources. Wildlife are highly dependent upon the status of aquatic, forestry and soil ecology. Today, the greatest threat to wildlife is habitat loss. The impact of human land use practices on wildlife populations and their habitats is a major concern nation-wide.

At Envirothon the wildlife station will emphasize animal wildlife in New York State. Students will be expected to have a basic understanding of regional species populations and their habitats, how they function and change over time and their role in the ecosystem. They should be able to identify common wildlife species and their corresponding characteristics and habitats. In addition, the wildlife learner should develop an awareness and knowledge of the following: specific adaptations of wildlife to their environment; wildlife survival needs; predator/prey relationships; food chains and food webs; factors that limit or enhance population growth; concepts of carrying capacity and limiting factors; non-native species; threatened and endangered species; and the roles of both the public and wildlife managers in the protection, conservation, management, and enhancement of wildlife populations.

"Without knowing it, we utilize hundreds of products each day that owe their origin to wild animals and plants. Indeed our welfare is intimately tied up with the welfare of wildlife. Well may conservationists proclaim that by saving the lives of wild species, we may be saving our own."

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ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

For successful completion of the wildlife section, contestants should be able to:

- Identify the mammal, bird, bird, amphibian and reptile species, insect and other species listed on the "Wildlife Species to Study" list using mounted specimens, skins/pelts, pictures, skulls, silhouettes, decoys, wings, feathers, scats, tracks, animal sounds, or other common signs
- Identify general food habits , habitats, and habits from teeth and/or skull morphology
- Know the preferred habitat types and specific habitat requirements of the above wildlife species and the factors that affect wildlife suitability
- Know and understand basic ecological concepts and terminology including the difference between an ecosystem, community and population
- Understand wildlife population dynamics and limiting and decimating factors of wildlife management
- Be able to identify, describe and explain adaptations of wildlife to their environment
- Understand the 3 levels of biodiversity and the implications of loss at each level
- Identify common wildlife management practices and methods that are being used to manage and improve wildlife habitat
- Understand the role of federal and state Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the management, conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- Be familiar with finding information found within the NYS hunting safety guide and hunter education program
- Understand the environmental impact of invasive species, threat to biodiversity, and impact on native wildlife
- Understand common land use decisions that affect wildlife population growth, environmental degradation, and habitat reduction
- Be familiar with common wildlife diseases from microbes, parasites, toxins, and other biological and physical agents
- Understand the terminology and factors that affect threatened and endangered wildlife species. Know examples of NYS species that are extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, and special concern

- Understand the role of the Endangered Species Act in helping to conserve endangered and threatened species. Know the organizations and agencies responsible for listing and protecting endangered species on global, federal, and state levels

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE OUTLINE

I. Identification of NYS Species

(<http://www.dec.ny.gov/23.html>)

- A. Identify NYS wildlife species by specimens, skins/pelts, pictures, skulls, silhouettes, decoys, wings, feathers, scats, tracks, animal sounds, or other common signs
- B. Identify general food habits, habitats, and habits from teeth and/or skull morphology
- C. Specific habitats of the above

II. Wildlife Ecology

- A. Basic ecological concepts and terminology
- B. Wildlife population dynamics
 - 1) Carrying capacity
 - 2) Limiting factors
- C. Adaptations of wildlife
 - 1) Anatomical, physiological and/or behavioral
- D. Biodiversity
 - 1) Genetic, species, ecosystem or community

III. Wildlife Conservation and Management

- A. Common management practices and methods

- 1) Conservation
- 2) Protection
- 3) Enhancement

- B. Hunting regulations
- C. Land conflicts with wildlife habitat needs
- D. Factors influencing management decisions
 - 1) Ecological
 - 2) Financial
 - 3) Social)
- E. Legislation

IV. Issues Involving Wildlife and Society

- A. Invasive and non-native species
 - 1) Examples in NY
 - 2) Environmental impact
- B. Endangered, Threatened, Species of Concern
 - 1) Examples native to NY
 - 2) Habitat requirements
 - 3) Legislation
 - 4) Terminology and factors
- C. Diseases Commonly found in NY

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION

Wildlife Species to study for the Envirothon wildlife competition, you should learn preferred habitat, food, and how to identify the following wildlife from mounts and photos, as well as skins, skulls, and tracks for mammals. Learn the calls for the listed birds. For Game Animals, age and sex criteria should be studied.

Mammals Black Bear, Bobcat, Canada Lynx, Eastern Cougar, Eastern Coyote, Gray Fox, Gray Wolf, Moose, Red Fox, White-tailed Deer, Allegheny Woodrat, American Marten, Beaver, Fisher, Long-tailed Weasel, Mink, Muskrat, Raccoon, River Otter, Striped Skunk, Indiana Bat, Little Brown Bat, Blue Whale, Finback Whale, Harbor Seal, Humpback Whale, Right Whale, Sei Whale, Sperm Whale cottontail, snowshoe (varying hare), short-tail weasel, least weasel, opossum, the squirrels (gray, red, flying, fox, & chipmunk), woodchuck, porcupine and moles, voles and shrews.

Birds American Woodcock, Bald Eagle, Bicknell's Thrush, Black Rail, Black Skimmer, Black Tern, Canada Goose, Cerulean Warbler, Common Loon, Common Nighthawk, Common Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, Eastern Bluebird, Eskimo Curlew, Golden Eagle, Golden-winged Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, Great Blue Heron, Great Horned Owl, Henslow's Sparrow, Horned Lark, Least Tern, Loggerhead Shrike, Mute Swan, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Piping Plover, Redheaded Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Roseate Tern, Ruffed Grouse, Seaside Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Short-eared Owl, Spruce Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Vesper Sparrow, Whip-poor-will, Wild Turkey, Yellow-breasted Chat, robin, English sparrow, cardinal, American bittern, screech owl, barn owl, snowy owl, bobolink, cat bird, the ducks, snipe, woodpeckers (downy, hairy, redbellied & pileated), flicker and the yellow bellied sapsucker.

Amphibians and reptiles Blanding's Turtle, Bog Turtle, Bullfrog, Diamondback Terrapin, Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Eastern Mud Turtle, Eastern (Red-Spotted) Newt, Eastern Hellbender, Eastern Tiger Salamander, Northern Cricket Frog, Snapping Turtle, Spotted Turtle, Timber Rattlesnake, Atlantic Hawksbill Sea Turtle, Atlantic Ridley Sea Turtle, Green Sea Turtle, Leatherback Sea Turtle, Loggerhead Sea Turtle, snakes (garter, redbellied, ring-necked & copperhead), painted turtle, frogs (green, leopard & pickerel), American toad

Others Monarch Butterfly, Karner Blue Butterfly, Praying and Chinese Mantises, Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail, Dwarf Wedge Mussel, Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, American Burying Beetle, Boxelder Bug, Pine Shoot Beetle, Viburnum Leaf Beetle

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. This song is being sung by what species of bird?

- a. Cerulean Warbler
- b. Eastern Bluebird
- c. Vesper Sparrow
- d. Mute Swan

2. Habitat is the place where an animal lives. It provides for the needs required by the animal to survive. The number of animals a habitat can support in good health is known as its _____

- a. bionic potential
- b. harvestable surplus
- c. carrying capacity
- d. home range

3. Many of the wildlife species of New York live in a certain habitat because of their needs to survive or physical adaptations that help them live in the habitat.

Least suited for a swamp/marsh habitat are _____.

- a. Woodcocks
- b. Redwing Blackbirds
- c. Wood ducks
- d. Woodchucks

4. During the last century, human impacts on our planet have led to an increasing and alarming loss of biodiversity. Scientists estimate that current extinction rates exceed those of prehistoric mass extinctions. Loss of biodiversity also means loss of genetic diversity and loss of ecosystems. In New York State the major cause for declines in species populations is which of the following?

- a. habitat destruction, alteration and fragmentation
- b. the spread of invasive species
- c. pollution
- d. illegal collection
- e. climate change

5. The following habitat management activities; 1) elimination of barriers that hinder migration between ponds and nest or hibernation sites, 2) placement of "turtle crossing" signs to warn motorists of the turtle's presence in key areas, and 3) maintenance of open areas for nesting, have been recommended to protect which species?

- a. Eastern mud turtle
- b. Diamondback terrapin
- c. Loggerhead sea turtle
- d. Bog turtle

6. Only the basic hunter education course is required to obtain a license to hunt waterfowl outside of special hunting areas. In addition to a small game hunting license what other requirement is necessary to hunt ducks in New York State?

- a. Waterfowl hunter education course certificate
- b. Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp.
- c. 36 square inches of hunter orange clothing
- d. a boat

7. New York State's Legislature has recognized certain wildlife species as significant to the state and designated them as state symbols. The state bird, fish, mammal and reptile are _____.

- a. Bluebird, Brook Trout, White-tailed Deer and Spotted Turtle
- b. Blue Jay, Speckled Trout, Beaver and Milk Snake
- c. Bald Eagle, Speckled Trout, White-tailed Deer and Painted Turtle
- d. Bluebird, Brook Trout, Beaver and Snapping Turtle

8. Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*), also known as "rock snot," is a non-native invasive microscopic algae (diatom) that can produce large amounts of stalk material to form thick brown mats on stream bottoms. Didymo threatens aquatic habitat, biodiversity and recreational opportunities. The only known method for controlling or eradicating didymo once it infests a water body is which of the following?

- a. Inspect, Clean and Dry method
- b. Weekly electroshocking the stream
- c. Chlorination
- d. There is no known control method

9. Little brown bats, the most common hibernating species of bats in New York, have sustained the largest number of bat deaths from which of the following diseases?

- a. Brain worm
- b. Type E botulism
- c. Trichomoniasis
- d. White-nose syndrome

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE – RESOURCES

I. Identification of NYS Species

[Bats](#), [Bear](#), [Beaver](#), [Bobcat](#), [Canada Goose](#), [Coyote](#), [Deer](#), [Eagles & Osprey](#), [Fisher](#), [Foxes](#), [Grouse](#), [Heron](#), [Mink & Muskrat](#), [Otter](#), [Owls](#), [Pheasant](#), [Rabbit](#), [Raccoon](#), [Raptors](#), [Shunk](#), [Weasels](#), [Wild Turkey](#), [Woodcock](#), [Woodpeckers](#), [Woodrat](#), [Smithsonian Mammal Guide](#), [Amphibians & Reptiles](#), [Bluebird](#), [Bog Turtle](#), [Wild Turkey](#), [Wetland Mammals](#), [Ringneck](#), [Grassland Birds](#), [Bats](#), [Small Mammals](#), [Large Mammals](#), [Eastern Bluebird](#), [Cottontail](#), [Flying Mammals](#), [Marine Mammals](#), [Birds](#), [Insects](#), [Tracks](#), [Track Card](#), [Age of Deer](#), [Mammal Skulls](#), [Skulls & Teeth](#), [Hinterland Who's Who](#)

II. Wildlife Ecology

[NE Wildlife](#), [Wildlife Ecology](#), [Early Successional Habitat](#), [Management Considerations](#), [American Woodcock Habitat BMPs](#), [Habitat Disturbance](#), [Backyard Habitat](#), [Mortality Fact Sheet](#) [Crypsis-Mimicry](#), [Biodiversity](#), [Biodiversity Brochure](#), [Climate Change and Bio Diversity](#)

III. Wildlife Conservation and Management

[Managing Whitetail Deer in Urban NY](#), [Hunting](#), [Waterbird Fact Sheet](#), [Songbird Fact Sheet](#), [Deer Management](#), [Whitetail Deer](#), [Moose](#), [Coyotes](#), [Black Bear](#), [Fields & Grassland Birds](#), [Hayfields & Grassland Birds](#), [2016 DEC Migratory Bird Guide](#), [2015-2016 Hunting and Trapping Guide](#),

[Migratory Bird Fact Sheet](#)

IV. Issues Involving Wildlife and Society

[Nuisance & Invasive Species](#), [Delisting](#), [Recovery](#), [Endangered](#), [Karner Blue Butterfly](#), [Current NY T&E List](#), [Extirpated](#), [NE Cottontails](#), [HCP](#), [Critical Habitat](#), [What You Can Do](#), [NY Wildlife Diseases](#), [Bird Flu](#)

Additional References:

[Bird Guide](#), [Photo Gallery](#), [Food Chain](#), [Artificial Nesting](#), [Biodiversity](#), [Cool SeasonGrasses](#), [Cropfield](#), [Freshwater Wetland](#), [Habitat Issue](#), [Old Field](#), [Pages from Damageid Complete](#), [Pasture & Hayland](#), [Riparian](#), [Snags](#), [Urban Management](#), [Wetland Woodland](#), [Planting Trees](#), [Blackbirds](#), [Bluejay](#), [Bob White](#), [Cardinal](#), [Chicks & Creeps](#), [Chipmunk](#), [Crows & Ravens](#), [Diving Ducks](#), [Dove](#), [Elk](#), [Finches](#), [Flycatchers](#), [Hummingbird](#), [Kingfisher](#), [Mallard](#), [Mice & Moles](#), [Mockingbird](#), [Nighthawk](#), [Opossum](#), [Porcupine](#), [Puddle duck](#), [Rails](#), [Shews](#), [Snowgoose](#), [Snowshoe](#), [Squirrels](#), [Swallows](#), [Tanagers](#), [Thrushes](#), [Towhee](#), [Tundra Swan](#), [Turkey](#), [Vireos](#), [Vultures](#), [Warblers](#), [Woodchuck](#), [Wrens](#), [Woodduck](#), [Water Fowl](#)

Website References:

[NYS DEC Endangered Program](#)
[NYS Fishing Regulations Guide](#)
[NYS Hunting and Trapping Guide](#)
[NYS DEC Bureau of Wildlife](#)

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE GLOSSARY

A

Abiotic – a non-living factor in an environment ie. light, water, temperature.

Aestivation – dormancy, generally seasonally

Accipiter – A hawk of the genus Accipiter, characterized by short wings and a long tail.

Aquatic – growing, living in or frequenting water

Arboreal – tree dweller

Autotroph – an organism capable of manufacturing its own food by synthesis of inorganic materials, as in photosynthesis.

B

Bergman's rule – among forms of a particular species, body size tends to be larger in the cooler regions of its range and smaller in the warmer regions.

Brood – the offspring of a bird just hatched.

Browse – (v) to eat the twigs and leaves of woody plants; (n) commonly used in wildlife management to signify brushy plants utilized by deer.

Buteo – Any of the various hawks of the genus Buteo, characterized by broad wings and broad, rounded tails.

C

Carapace – the upper or dorsal surface of a turtle's shell.

Carnivore – An animal belonging to the order Carnivora, including predominantly meat-eating mammals.

Carrion – the bodies of dead animals usually found in nature in a decaying state.

Carrying capacity – The number of wildlife species that a given unit of habitat will support without damage to the habitat.

Cast – to regurgitate indigestible prey remains

Circadian – designating a biological period of about 24 hours.

Climax stage – the final stage of plant succession.

Consumptive use – any use that involves activity resulting in the loss of wildlife i.e. hunting.

Contiguous forests – Forests that share an edge or boundary, touching.

Coverts – One or more of a group of feathers covering the bases of the longer main feathers of a bird's wings or tail.

Covey – a small group or flock, often a family group, of birds such as quail.

Crepuscular – appearing or becoming active at twilight or dawn.

Clutch – eggs laid and incubated by a female bird per nesting.

Corridor – areas of continuous habitat that permit animals to travel securely from one habitat to another.

D

Dabbling ducks – duck species that principally feed in shallow water by “tipping up” or dabbling on the surface.

Den For bears, can be a hollow tree or log, under roots or a brushpile, or a crevice between or under boulders.

Depredation – the act of preying upon. Mostly wildlife damage to farmer’s crops.

Diurnal – A term used to describe an animal that is most active by day.

Diving ducks – duck species that feed principally by diving below the surface

Dorsal – of or pertaining to the upper surface.

Dump nest – eggs deposited by more than one female in a single nest.

E

Edge – the place where two or more different plant communities, successional stages or vegetative stages come together or meet.

Endangered Species

Plants or animals that are native to New York and that are in imminent danger of extirpation or extinction here and that are listed as endangered in Section 182.5 of the Environmental Conservation Law § 11-0535 (animals including mollusks, insects, fishes, birds, and mammals), 6 NYCRR 193.3 (plants) or that are listed as endangered by the United States Department of the Interior in the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR part 17).

Endemic – confined to a certain area or region.

Estivation – a state of inactivity during prolonged periods of drought or high temperatures.

Exotic – Not a native species. Was either introduced or escaped.

F

Flyway – fly routes established by migratory birds.

Food chain or food web – the relationship between autotrophs, herbivores, and carnivores.

Forest Game – Game species that are managed by the DEC whose habitat needs are found mainly in forests.

Furbearers – Various animals that have a thick coat of soft hair covering their bodies. The New York DEC regulates the harvesting of 14 furbearing species: red and gray fox, coyote, bobcat, raccoon, skunk, mink, weasel, and opossum.

G

Guard hairs – Long, coarse hairs that forms a protective coating over an animal’s under fur.

H

Harriers – Any of the various slender, narrow-winged hawks of the genus *Circus*, which prey on small animals.

Harvest – proportion or number of a wildlife population brought to bag by hunters; in wildlife management, killing an animal.

Herbivore – An animal that eats plants.

Herpetology – The scientific study of reptiles and amphibians as a branch of Zoology.

Hibernation – passing the winter or a portion of it in a state of sleep

Home Range – The area an animal travel in when looking for food, shelter or a mate

Humus – Material resulting from decayed plant and animal matter. It provides nutrients for plants and helps keep water in the soil.

I

Indigenous – a naturally occurring species.

Insectivore – a mammal or organism that feeds on insects.

Inventory – the process of counting or identifying animals.

K

Keel – a ridge down the back or along the plastron of a turtle or a longitudinal ridge On a dorsal scale in certain snakes.

L

Lateral – pertaining to the side.

Limiting factor – Anything that affects a species population. It could result from causes in nature as well as human activities. Examples include food, water, shelter, space, disease, predation, climatic conditions, pollution, hunting, poaching and accidents.

Litter – the number of young born with each birthing.

M

Mandibles – either the upper or lower part of the beak in birds.

Marsupial – A mammal of the order Marsupialia that includes kangaroos, opossums, bandicoots and wombats. These

females have pouches that contain mammary glands and that shelter the young until fully developed.

Melanistic – Abnormally dark pigmentation of the skin or other tissues. Black pigmented.

Migratory Game Bird All wild ducks, geese, and brant. (These also are "migratory waterfowl").

Coot, Virginia rails, sora rails, and gallinules, woodcock and snipe.

Molt – the process of shedding or replacing feathers.

Monogamous – term used when one male breeds with one female.

Mortality (death rate) – the number of animals that die each year.

N

Natality (birth rate) – ability of a population to increase; reproductive rate.

Niche – that part of a habitat particularly suited to the requirements of a given species.

Nocturnal – active by night; the opposite of diurnal.

Nonconsumptive use – any use that does not directly kill wildlife, i.e. bird watching, hiking, photography.

O

Omnivore – An animal or organism that feeds on both animal and plant matter.

Ornithology – The scientific study of birds as a branch of zoology.

P

Parasite – an organism that lives by deriving benefit (usually doing harm) from another organism.

Philopatry – annual homing to the same nesting area and often the same nest site.

Polygamy or polygyny – term used when a male animal breeds with many females.

Passerine – Birds of the order Passeriformes, which include perching birds and songbirds such as the jays, blackbirds, finches, warblers and sparrows.

Pelage – The coat of a mammal, consisting of hair, fur, wool or other soft covering, as distinct from bare skin.

Population – the number of a particular species in a defined area.

Population dynamics – factors regulating population levels including natality, productivity and mortality.

Plastron – The ventral surface of the shell of a turtle or tortoise.

R

Recruitment – addition of a number of young to an adult population of breeders.

Riparian area – the area of influence between upland habitats and aquatic habitats.

S

SAV (submerged aquatic vegetation) – vascular plants that live and grow completely underwater.

Scat – The excrement droppings of an animal.

Species – populations of animals that possess common characteristics and freely interbreed in nature and produce fertile offspring.

Species richness – the number of wildlife species found in a given area.

T

Taxonomy – the science of the classification of animals or plants.

Torpor – temporary loss of all or part of the power of motion.

Trophic level – a feeding level in the food chain of an ecosystem characterized by Organisms that occupy a similar functional position in the ecosystem.

U, V, W

Upland game – Game species that are managed by the DEC whose habitat needs are usually found in upland areas.

Ventral – of or pertaining to the lower surface.

Waterfowl – water birds, usually referring to ducks, geese and swans.

ENVIROTHON: WILDLIFE SUGGESTED ACTIVITES

1. Explain the meaning of the terms "migration route" and "flyway". Know the four major North American flyways and understand the importance of these routes to migratory land, water and shore birds.
2. Determine which common wildlife species in your area depend on open land, woodland and wetland habitat for their survival. Identify the various types of habitat within open lands, woodlands, and wetlands, and explain the importance of these specific habitats to common wildlife species within your area.
3. Explain why human use of land is the major reason for habitat loss. Provide examples of habitat destruction, fragmentation, and degradation and explain how wildlife species survival is threatened by habitat loss in your area.
4. Research and analyze controversial issues in order to understand the relationship between wildlife, economics and society. Penn. State School of Forest Resources: The Social and Economic Impact of Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Lesson Plan
5. Make a list of wildlife management practices and strategies that will restore or improve habitat for each of the following land uses: cropland, grassland, woodland, wetland, pond/lake, and urban setting (backyards, greenways, urban parks). Include specific wildlife species that will benefit from each wildlife practice or strategy.
6. Make a list of the Federal and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies within your state or province. Determine how each protects and manages the wildlife resources of your area, and describe activities and programs that are undertaken to protect and manage wildlife and their habitats.
7. Explain regulated trapping procedures and discuss the issues that are involved in trapping furbearing animals. Research and explain the dilemma of biological carrying capacity vs. cultural carrying capacity in your discussion.
8. Explain how Wildlife Managers are using Satellite Remote Sensing, GPS and GIS in Conservation and Wildlife Management. Give an example explaining the benefits of using this technology in remote areas.

What Does a Wildlife Biologist Do?

Wildlife Biologists are scientists that observe and study the behaviors of animals. They frequently observe the features of certain wildlife and determine the creatures' role in specific ecosystems and/or how they interact with human beings. In addition, they will often perform various experiments to either increase our knowledge about a certain species or see how humans influence the ecosystem in question.

Many Wildlife Biologists will eventually specialize into a particular area of study defined by ecosystem or species. Some of these fields include: Entomology, Ornithology, Marine Biology, or Limnology.

Wildlife Biologists are extremely important to preserving the current state of our environment and deepening our understanding of the other creatures that share our planet with us.

Becoming a Wildlife Biologist is a fantastic position for someone who enjoys spending time outdoors and traveling. Many Wildlife Biologists spend the majority of their time working in the field, observing animals in their natural habitats. Some Wildlife Biologists work in labs or offices, but many only find themselves in these locations for small amounts of time. This is the perfect career for an adventurer who likes to work in a variety of environments.

Wildlife Biologists often cite physical exhaustion and loneliness as the top job hazards. They may be required to spend time in remote areas without modern conveniences and work long hours for observational purposes. Some kinds of work will require you to have limited contact with other people, possibly straining relationships and personal emotions.

However, it's important to note that Wildlife Biologists do not always work alone. In fact, many of them work on research teams, meaning that they may unite with colleagues at the end of an observation period to discuss findings. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average Wildlife Biologist's salary is \$57,710. Most Wildlife Biologists work full-time with the potential to work overtime or evening hours depending on their subject of study.

