

Conserving Georgia's Nongame Wildlife

2016

FISCAL YEAR REPORT SUMMARY



GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION



As part of Georgia DNR's Wildlife Resources Division, our mission at the Nongame Conservation Section is conserving the more than 95 percent of native species not fished for or hunted, plus rare plants and natural habitats.

In fiscal year 2016, we witnessed highs and lows related to that mission. Two examples:

Loggerhead sea turtles shattered the previous state record with more than 3,200 nests on Georgia beaches. That far surpassed a state recovery benchmark. The take-home: These federally listed turtles are recovering.

On the flip side, the disease that has killed millions of bats in North America isn't sparing Georgia. Our surveys of white-nose syndrome have documented 92 percent fewer bats in caves and mines we check each winter.

These examples illustrate one thing: Conserving wildlife is long-term work, full of highs and lows.

Yet most would agree that it's also vital work. And that it is our responsibility to pass on to future generations the incredible variety of wild creatures and wild places that enrich our lives now.

This summary report offers a glimpse of our agency's efforts to research, restore and protect sea turtles, bats and the scores of other native animal and plant species considered a high priority for conservation in Georgia.

The full report is available at www.georgiawildlife.com/conservation/AnnualReport.

I hope you find this account informative, encouraging and, yes, challenging – a challenge to become involved in and support the conservation of Georgia's nongame wildlife.

Thank you,

Jon Ambrose

Chief, Nongame Conservation Section



CONSERVING WILDLIFE AND RARE PLANTS



RESTORING HABITAT



ENGAGING GEORGIANS



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

We **led** the revision of Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan, now approved and guiding DNR and partner efforts to keep native species from declining to the point they need federal protection.

Coordinated the Georgia Sea Turtle Cooperative, which documented loggerhead sea turtle nesting that is increasing about 3% a year in Georgia and easily topped a recovery milestone of 2,800 nests.



Swabbing bat

Confirmed that white-nose syndrome – the disease deadly to bats – has spread to 11 counties and caused a steep decline in populations at known bat hibernacula in north Georgia.

Promoted the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance, leading to an Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' award recognizing the alliance for its outstanding contributions to professional wildlife management.



Sicklefin redbreast

Supported DNR as a signatory to a Candidate Conservation Agreement to conserve sicklefin redbreast, an agreement later cited with helping keep this rare fish off the federal endangered species list.

Played a key role in DNR's Wildlife Resources Division almost doubling the amount of restorative prescribed fire on DNR-managed lands since 2007, from 31,897 to 60,363 acres in 2016.



Celebrating coloring book with First Lady Sandra Deal (Jasmine King)

Created a popular children's coloring book using a grant from the nongame friends group TERN and designed to help teach conservation and promote Wildlife Resources license plates.

Provided surveys DNR used in acquiring 18,790 acres for recreation and wildlife, including Alapaha River and Altama Plantation WMAs in south Georgia and 1,700 acres for Paulding Forest WMA near Atlanta.

Worked to form a St. Simons Island Beach Stewards Program, a volunteer group that helped more than 100 pairs of federally endangered least terns fledge chicks on one of Georgia's most popular beaches.

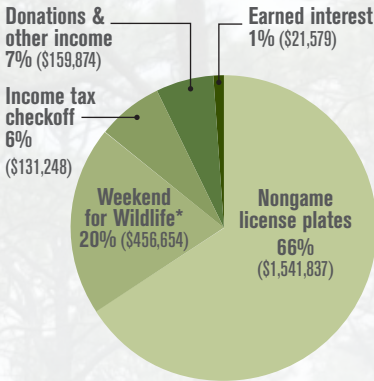
Through Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, one of seven education centers Wildlife Resources operates with schools and others, **trained** 525 teachers in Project WILD environmental education courses.

Helped develop an upper Little Tennessee watershed plan and recognize 2015 Forestry for Wildlife Partners Georgia Power, Weyerhaeuser and CatchMark Timber Trust, which collectively manage 1 million acres.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE

TOTAL: \$2,311,192*

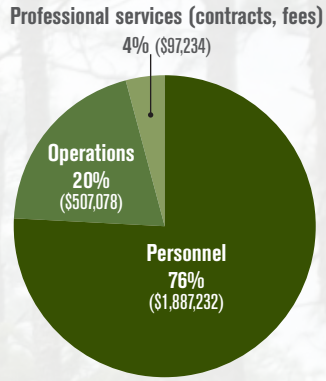


Does not include federal and other grants or \$429,318 in state appropriations.

* Includes estimated revenue from Weekend for Wildlife that will be disbursed through the Georgia Natural Resources Foundation.

EXPENDITURES

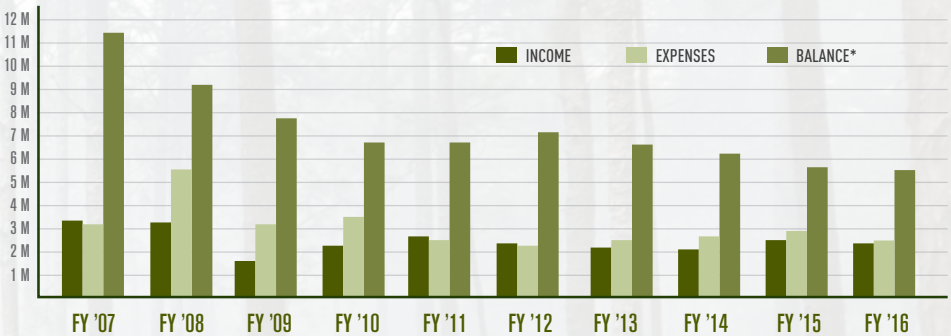
TOTAL: \$2,491,544



Through Nongame Fund.

NONGAME CONSERVATION FUND

Listed in millions per year

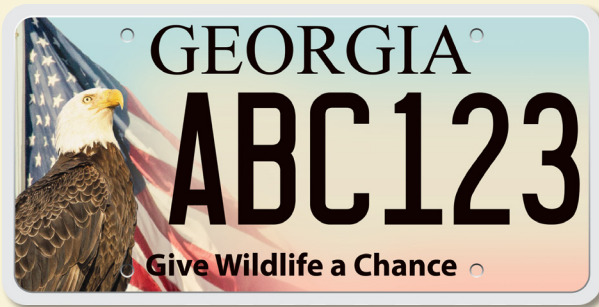


* Includes estimated revenue that will be disbursed through the Georgia Natural Resources Foundation.

NOTEWORTHY

- As in fiscal 2015, sales and renewals of DNR nongame license plates exceeded \$1.5 million in 2016; yet, the number of eagle and hummingbird tags in circulation continued to decline.
- Nongame Conservation received state appropriations for the first time in years, the \$429,318 making up about 6% of the agency's research and conservation budget.
- Contributions to the Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund through the "Give Wildlife a Chance" state income tax checkoff hit a record low of \$131,248, 45% less than in fiscal 2015.
- The Environmental Resources Network (TERN), Nongame Conservation's friends group, funded 20 nongame project proposals for a combined \$69,918.
- Nongame Conservation received nearly \$10.1 million in federal and other grants, including \$7 million for land acquisition and \$1.3 million in State Wildlife Grants.

Find our full report and an interactive guide at www.georgiawildlife.com/conservation/AnnualReport.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Nongame Conservation Section depends largely on fundraisers, grants and contributions to conserve nongame wildlife, rare plants and the habitats these species need.

Three agency fundraisers provide critical support through the Georgia Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund, created by state law to support nongame conservation and habitat acquisition:

- Sales and annual renewals of DNR's **eagle and hummingbird license plates**.
- The **"Give Wildlife a Chance"** state income tax checkoff.
- The annual **Weekend for Wildlife** event, www1.gadnr.org/wfw.

License plates provide more than half of the fund's revenue.

Shortly after the close of fiscal 2016, DNR introduced a redesigned eagle and U.S. flag tag, a sharp new look for an iconic combo that has been one of the most popular specialty plates in Georgia.

How can you support wildlife conservation?

1. Buy or renew an eagle or hummingbird plate. Each costs only \$25 more than a standard peach plate and up to 80% of that fee goes to conserve nongame.
2. Make a direct contribution to the Wildlife Conservation Fund. Learn more at www.georgiawildlife.com/conservation/support.
3. Explore ways to take part in wildlife work, whether by volunteering through agencies or joining conservation organizations such as TERN, friends group of Nongame Conservation. (DNR volunteer details are at www.georgiawildlife.com/getinvolved/volunteer.)
4. Learn about the wildlife and plants in your yard, region and state. Check out DNR social media and www.georgiawildlife.com for updates and species profiles.
5. Last but certainly not least, get out and enjoy Georgia's outdoors!

FOLLOW US:      

Also sign up for Nongame Conservation's free e-newsletter, Georgia Wild. Click the red envelope  at www.georgiawildlife.com

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COVER: Loggerhead hatchling (Haley Watkins/Sea Island). All photos are from DNR unless noted.
PAGE 2: Surveying Georgia aster | Gopher tortoise at Doerun WMA
Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School students thrilled by hellbender (Johnathan BySura/Rabun Gap-Nacoochee) | Bald eagle (Jerry Turner)