



NORTHEAST PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

2008 Annual Meeting

Powder Mill Nature Reserve, Rector, Pennsylvania

August 13th-15th, 2008

2008 MEETING MINUTES: ACTION ITEMS AND WORKING GROUPS

Working Groups

Below is an alphabetical list of all NEPARC working groups and a summary of their activities and plans.

Box Turtle Working Group

The Box Turtle Working Group was formed at the 2005 NEPARC meeting. The group discussions focused on the following plans:

- Compile and develop educational materials that will help efforts to conserve the eastern box turtle. Completed project examples include producing a postcard encouraging people to leave box turtles in the wild.
- Developing an informational webpage to direct people to existing educational materials
- Compiling a list of veterinarians and wildlife rehabilitators that work on turtles
- Summarize state collection regulations

Emerging Diseases Working Group

During this August 2008 meeting we agreed to explore the possibility of submitting one or more grant applications to support investigation of the locations of the chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd), which is responsible for multiple major amphibian population reductions around the world, and the Ranavirus, which includes species lethal for amphibians, turtles, and fish, in the Northeast. Although substantial testing for Bd has already been done in some parts of the Northeast, some states and some regions have not been investigated to date. Information about the Ranavirus in the Northeast is less abundant, but is a potentially major infectious agent in the area.

Grants to consider were the National Competitive SWG grant, the Regional Conservation Grant, and possibly a DOD Legacy grant.

In addition, members agreed that we should develop information for our website that included information about these diseases, how they are detected, and ways to avoid transferring them between sites.

Important Herp Areas Working Group

The Important Herp Area (IHA) program is an initiative of PARC National to develop a network of geographically specific focus areas designed specifically for the conservation of reptiles and amphibians. Modeled in part after the popular Important Bird Areas (IBAs) program developed by Partners In Flight, the IHA program is intended to be coordinated nationally but implemented locally at the state or regional scale. Those IHAs that meet standardized regional criteria will be endorsed by PARC and shared with major conservation partners in an effort to advance habitat protection for priority herptiles.



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A National IHA coordinating team was established in 2007 and has held multiple conference call meetings with the goal of developing draft IHA eligibility criteria and implementation guidelines available for review by regional PARC IHA teams in 2008. The national IHA team is currently comprised of seven members with representation from each PARC region as follows:

Ron Sutherland, SEPARC (Duke University)

Margaret Griep, SEPARC (USFS)

Phillip deMaynadier, NEPARC (Maine Dept of Fish & Wildlife)

Randy Jennings, SWPARC (Western New Mexico University)

Karen Kinkead, MWPARC (Iowa DNR)

Audrey Hatch, NWPARC (Oregon Fish & Wildlife)

Priya Nanjappa Mitchell (Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies; PARC National)

IHA National Team Progress (2007-2008):

- Developed a statement of purpose and assembled a national team (above)
- Reviewed existing programs that might inform IHA methodology including Partner In Flight's IBAs, Individual State IBAs (e.g. NY, PA, ME), the Canadian Important Amphibian and Reptile Areas (IMPARA) program, and Iowa's Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area (ARCA) program.
- Weighed the benefits and drawbacks of national vs. regional vs. state approaches toward implementation. The IHA National Team is likely to recommend a nested approach whereby draft standards and criteria are distributed nationally, focus area solicitation and review is conducted regionally (by regional PARC IHA teams), and focus area research, nomination, and implementation is conducted at the state level.
- Developed a draft administrative protocol that facilitates state and regional cooperation in the nomination and selection process of state IHAs.
- Developed draft eligibility criteria for IHAs based on a combination of a) landscape viability, b) herptile species rarity, and c) herptile community richness. These criteria are designed to ensure that nominated sites represent exceptionally important state targets for reptile and amphibian conservation - places with significant populations of rare and declining species and/or areas of high species diversity embedded in relatively intact (or restorable) landscapes.
- Discussed a vision of IHA scale and mostly agreed that focus areas should be large enough to contain viable populations of priority conservation species but small enough to represent realistic targets for landscape conservation. When possible area boundaries should be trimmed to the minimum size required to achieve long-term conservation success, or to a scale where limited resources can be marshaled to make tangible progress toward land conservation and restoration over the next 30 years. This approach will likely fall at an intermediate landscape scale -- one that falls above the scale of individual parcels and below the scale of entire biophysical regions.
- Developed a draft list of members for invitation to each of five regional IHA oversight and review teams. Potential members for each region have been selected by each of the IHA National Team participants. IHA Regional Teams are open to those with a strong interest in the IHA mission but needs to remain small enough to keep teams manageable and efficient. Most teams are currently comprised of 5-10 members. The current NEPARC draft Regional Team (based on previously expressed interest) may be too large with ~15 members (attached).



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Next Steps:

- Draft an introductory narrative introducing and explaining the IHA vision and anticipated products.
- Review and finalize IHA implementation module, providing guidance to regions on site selection and boundary mapping.
- Review and finalize draft list of IHA Regional Teams.
- Finalize IHA Draft Package (i.e. Introduction and Goals, Biological Criteria, & Implementation Guidelines) and solicit review from IHA Regional Teams.
- Review feedback and finalize IHA program materials for review and endorsement by PARC National.
- Assist IHA Regional Teams and PARC National with program outreach and solicitation.

Appendix 1. Draft IHA Regional Team for NEPARC

NAME	EMAIL	AFFILIATION
Garcia, Ernest	ernest_garcia@fws.gov	USFWS
Heilferty, John	john.heilferty@dep.state.nj.us	NJ Dept Environmental Protection
Johnson, Liz	ejohnson@amnh.org	American Museum of Natural History
Kolozsvary, Mary Beth	mkolozsv@mail.nysed.gov	NY State Museum
Resetar, Alan	aresetar@fieldmuseum.org	Field Museum of Natural History
Tyning, Thomas	ttyning@berkshirecc.edu	Berkshire Community College
Williams, Charles	cwilliams@paconserve.org	Western Penn. Conservancy
Golden, David	dgolden@gtc3.com	NJ Fish and Wildlife
Mays, Jonathan	jonathan.mays@maine.gov	MDIFW
Kleopfer, John	john.kleopfer@dgif.virginia.gov	Virginia Fish & Game, NEPARC Co-Chair
Whitlock, Alison	Alison_Whitlock@fws.gov	USFWS NE Regional Office, Herptile Lead
Niederriter, Holly	Holly.Niederriter@state.de.us	DE Natural Heritage, NEPARC Co-Chair
Smith, Scott	sasmith@dnr.state.md.us	Maryland DNR
Marchand, Mike	michael.n.marchand@wildlife.nh.gov	New Hampshire Fish & Game
deMaynadier, Phillip	phillip.demaynadier@maine.gov	MDIFW

Land Use Guidelines Working Group

A goal of this group is to better link the land use planning and herpetology communities by providing useful information for both. Products developed to date include a list of relevant biodiversity conservation and planning literature, which is posted on the NEPARC website.

In addition to reviewing and updating the list of references and the contact list of planning organizations of the northeast, we spent time reviewing and discussing the document, "Nine Rules for Biodiversity-Friendly Residential Development" that was carefully drafted for the working group by Amy Alstead. Among the many good comments presented were a suggestion to expand the target audience of developers to include municipal officials and to include a more detailed appendix that would refer readers to relevant state rules and regulations. Suggestions were made to reach out to other organizations to seek



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endorsements for the final document as well as to ensure that there are no conflicts with any other taxon-based recommendations by other organizations (e.g. Audubon, PIF, NWF). In addition, reaching out to other groups like the National Home Builders Association (via their green certification program) was also mentioned as possible sources of new information to include in the document.

Action Items:

- Solicit new feedback and add updates to the biodiversity reference list on the website. (All – September 08 - completed – no updates)
- Review the contact list of planning organizations and other relevant nongovernment organizations for the northeast and make any additions or corrections. (All – September 08 – completed)
- Send introductory letter to the organizations on the contact list about NEPARC and land use biodiversity references available online. (pending comment from executive committee – Jan 08)
- Revise the “Nine Rules for Biodiversity-Friendly Residential Development” document based on discussion at August NEPARC meeting and send to committee for review and comment (January 2009). Document to be finalized and posted online by July 2009.
- New product to work on if above actions items completed: Prepare a summary of time-of-year restrictions for development and/or land management activities to avoid negative impacts to amphibians and reptiles. Consider incorporating time-of-year restrictions for other taxonomic groups (e.g., fish).

Roads & Road Salt Working Groups

The Road Working Group is a subgroup of the national working group on roads. Its goal is to create a document with a set of recommendations for the planning process for road construction, to help make roads more herp-friendly from the beginning (rather than expensive retrofitting). The Road Salt working group has produced a Bibliography on

Road Salt Working Groups

The Road Salt working group has produced a bibliography of publications on the influences of deicing salts and associated compounds on amphibians and their environment. The group plans a white paper on the effects of road salt on human and wildlife health and alternatives to current road salt practices.

Snake Education Working Groups

Last year this group developed ideas for new brochure on snakes. Efforts to raise funds to print it were met and deterred by the belief this already existed. Upon discussion this year we felt it still was needed. A draft brochure developed from last year's group's ideas was passed around and discussed:

- Want both Web and paper versions
- List states of occurrence – Range map (not needed)
- Status (T&E)



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- Habitat-not needed
- Make photos larger/add other color variations
- Produce PDF on PARC website for now
- Use photos of head, dorsal, ventral, and tail
- Remove some of text? Use name of snake?
- Dichotomous key may be too complicated for people
- Need photos: massasauga, corn (juv), black rat (juv), copperhead (adult & neonate), hognose, milksnake, N. water (ad & neo), canebrake, garter (color variations)
- Use drawings instead of photos? Artists?
- Denote venomous w/ asterisk vs. space consumptive headings
- Use both cottonmouth and water moccasin names
- Species common to human structures... but all are common to front porch steps...
- Change brochure title: "Don't Kill That Snake!" (or something similar)
- Future website can have much more detail that can't fit on brochure
- A new project was also discussed: Calendar of Snakes of NE? (NEPARC Fundraiser?)

Scott Smith will continue to collect useful photos. This discussion will continue via email and hopefully deadlines will help keep the effort moving.

State Wildlife Action Plans Working Groups

The State Wildlife Action Plans Working Group was formed at the 2006 NEPARC meeting. The groups' goal is to provide guidance regarding State Wildlife Grant projects involving herp conservation on a regional level. A list of regional priority herp species was developed based on: a) State's Wildlife Action Plan Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) lists and Risk Assessment, b) identification of northeast species of responsibility using range maps (those species whose core range falls within the northeastern states will have a higher priority for conservation actions). The working group has compiled additional information about each species on the list to help prioritize species needs. The group plans to identify and recommend priority conservation actions and other ways for NEPARC to address needs of these species of northeastern responsibility.

NEPARC Business

Nominations and election of new co-chair

Co-chairs represent NEPARC at PARC meetings and conference calls, helps to organize the annual meeting and facilitates the monthly NEPARC steering committee conference calls.

Nominees were:

- Dave Golden – congratulations Dave!

NEPARC Steering Committee

See the About section of the NEPARC website for committee membership details. The 2008 Steering committee will include:



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- Jay Drasher (Aqua-Terra Environmental Ltd)
- Lori Erb (Massachusetts DFW - Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program)
- Dave Golden (NEPARC co-chair, New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife)
- Shelly Grow (Association of Zoos and Aquariums)
- Glenn Johnson (SUNY Potsdam)
- John Kleopfer (NEPARC co-chair, Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries)
- Mary Beth Kolozsvary (New York State Biodiversity Research Institute)
- Holly Niederriter (Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife)
- Duncan Simpson (Towson University)
- Valorie Titus (2009 meeting host, Binghamton University)
- Tina Walther (Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission)
- Joy Ware (Virginia Commonwealth University)
- Linda Weir (USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center)
- Alison Whitlock (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)

NEPARC Sponsors:

We thank all our generous contributors for donating items to the NEPARC silent auction.

Thanks

NEPARC would like to acknowledge the efforts involved in assembling the 2008 meeting minutes. Valorie Titus took minutes during the meeting. Revisions to the draft minutes were completed by members of the steering committee.

Silent Auction

Participants were invited to contribute items for a silent auction to raise money to allow NEPARC to reduce registration fees for students who presented. Auction items included herp t-shirts, posters, books, beverages, and other items. The auction raised \$431.00 for a student travel prize and to send co-chairs to national meetings. Thanks to all who donated items!