

WISCONSIN ENDANGERED RESOURCES REPORT 20

BUREAU OF ENDANGERED RESOURCES 1985 ANNUAL REPORT

Edited by S. Kelly Kearns

SUMMARY

Thorough statewide surveys were conducted for endangered and threatened species, including red-necked grebe, Forster's and common terns, great egret, piping plover, double-crested cormorant, osprey, bald eagle, timber wolf, kitten tail (*Besseyia bullii*), and monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*). Less intensive surveys were conducted for other species of concern. Staff and volunteers conducted breeding bird surveys on over 150 natural areas, and auditory frog surveys on ca 56 roadside routes. Captive-produced barn-owls were released, nest boxes erected, and radio telemetry studies conducted on wild and captive-produced birds. Management of nest sites also occurred for Forster's and common terns, piping plover, double-crested cormorant, and osprey. Research began on declining grassland birds. Timber wolf populations were monitored with the help of radio tracking, and studies began on the extent and effects of parvovirus. Barn-owl, timber wolf, and pine marten recovery plans were drafted. Twenty species of wild plants were added to the state's Endangered and Threatened Species List.

Three new Natural Areas were acquired, 4 were expanded, and 2 others were added to the system through dedication, comprising a total of 2,473 acres. Natural Areas management plans were completed and user surveys were conducted. Areas were managed by prescribed burns, brush and purple loosestrife control, fencing, construction of boardwalks, etc. We reviewed DNR master plans, U.S. Forest Service management plans and environmental impact assessments, administered ginseng and endangered species permit programs, helped develop regulations, conducted public education programs, and coordinated volunteers. An 'Adopt an Eagle Nest' program was begun and raised \$10,000 in its first year. With partial funding from The Nature Conservancy, a new Natural Heritage Inventory program was initiated. New staff include a zoologist/coordinator, botanist, ecologist, and data manager. The Bureau of Endangered Resources is funded largely by voluntary contributions to the Endangered Resources Fund, which netted \$472,000 in 1985. An 'Adopt an Eagle Nest' program was begun and raised \$10,000 in its first year.

BUREAU OF ENDANGERED RESOURCES
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707
608-266-7012

January 1986



NONGAME SPECIES SECTION



SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

Breeding Bird Surveys on Scientific and Natural Areas

Forty-one cooperators and Bureau of Endangered Resources (BER) personnel conducted surveys on approximately 56 designated scientific areas and 100 natural areas throughout the state. At the end of the 1985 field season 160 of the 200 currently designated scientific areas have now been surveyed at least once.

Frog and Toad Survey

Cooperators conducted auditory surveys on approximately 56 routes throughout the state. This is the fifth year of the survey and the second year of a long term monitoring program using permanent routes. Many miscellaneous records of endangered and "watch" species were collected. A systematic survey of historic and potential cricket frog sites was also begun, and several new sites were documented for this endangered species. However, cricket frogs were absent from many historical sites.

Red-necked Grebe

The last thorough statewide census of red-necked grebes was undertaken in 1983 when a total of 63 pairs nested at five sites in three counties. In 1984 and 1985 the species nested in only three of these sites. Numbers are declining at the state's major colony on Rush Lake where the species has nested since the 1930's. This is likely due to higher water levels that have resulted from an artificial dam. We hope to initiate a research and management program during the next two years for this wetland, which is important for a number of nongame, threatened and endangered wildlife species. Experiments with artificial nesting structures in St. Croix County have been unsuccessful thus far.

Forster's Tern

A thorough survey of all traditional and potential nesting areas in 1985 revealed 416 pairs of Forster's terns nesting at 8 sites statewide. This number was down from 1984 due to high water levels in the Green Bay area. Of these nests, 248 were on platforms in Lake Poygan and Rush Lake. Forster's terns nested on all platforms set out. However, all nests on Rush Lake (43) were abandoned, evidently due to predation by great horned owls. One new nesting site on natural substrate was found in the Sensiba Wildlife Area.

Common Tern

Statewide the number of common tern nesting pairs and colony locations is increasing. A total of 644 nesting pairs occupied six island colony sites in northwestern and northeastern Wisconsin in 1985. Reproductive success, however, was dismal in part due to great horned owl predation, vegetative succession, and human disturbance. No more than 25 young are known to have fledged from the six combined sites.

Wisconsin participated for the second successive year in a study (directed by the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center) evaluating the effects of contaminants on the breeding success on Great Lakes common terns. The study sites included the Ashland Pier in Chequamegon Bay and a fenced portion of Kidney Island in Green Bay.

Great Egret

Data for 1985 season are as yet incomplete. Aerial and ground surveys of traditional and potential Great egret colonies in 1984 revealed an approximate statewide nesting population of 344 great egret pairs and a total of 8 colonies which ranged in size from 2-159 egret pairs. One of these colonies was new and another contained egret nests for the first time since 1973. Nesting great blue herons outnumbered great egrets in all colonies. Egret populations along the Mississippi River were surveyed in 1984 by the Wisconsin BER, the Iowa Conservation Commission and the Minnesota DNR. Seven colonies consisting of a total of 332 nests were located on the west side of the Mississippi River were just beyond Wisconsin's boundaries in Iowa and Minnesota. The total of 137 great egret nests along the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi represents a 24% decline from the 180-plus nests calculated for the same area in 1977.

Piping Plover

One breeding pair returned to a traditional Chequamegon Point territory on Lake Superior during the spring and early summer of 1985. Nesting attempts, however, were not evident; this is the second successive year that no production has occurred on Chequamegon Point. The Long Island-Chequamegon Point beach and dune communities continue to experience human disturbance. The invasion of Ammophila breviligulata (beach or marram grass) is reducing the size of available nesting habitat. Development and maintenance of nesting habitat will be a priority in 1986.

Double-crested Cormorant

Wisconsin's double-crested cormorant population continued to expand in 1985 with 22 colonies containing a total of 2216 nesting pairs. In 1984 a total of 1,904 nesting pairs occupied 17 colonies. It would appear that at no time in this century has the state's cormorant population been as high or as widely distributed. A factor contributing to the recovery of the species has been the use of artificial nesting platforms in central and northeastern Wisconsin. The BER will be proposing to delist the species in 1986.

Loggerhead Shrike

During 1984 and 1985 BER collected substantial data on recent and historic nestings of this species. At least three active nests were documented in both years. Approximately 10 former nesting areas were surveyed and all found to be inactive.

Common Barn-owl

One pair of barn-owls nested successfully in both 1984 and 1985 in the same silver maple in the Village of Deerfield, eastern Dane County. In 1984 at least six young fledged. In 1985, four young fledged. A radio-telemetry

