

D V E A

# NATURE'S NEWSLETTER

ONLINE EDITION



WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT



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## FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Top	© Todd Finlayson, Photographer
Center Left	© Drawing by Yoke Bauer DiGiorgio
Center Right	© Painting by Ester Curini
Bottom	© Photo courtesy of <a href="http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/">http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/</a>

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# DISCOVERING NATURE



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## SEA TURTLES OF NEW YORK

Did you know that you do not need to travel to a tropical climate to see sea turtles?

You can find several species of sea turtles as water temperatures begin to rise in late spring and early summer. During these months, the waters of New York (NY) become more suitable for sea turtles, and you can find four species of sea turtles:

### Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

Green sea turtles are a wide-ranging species that, in the U.S. Atlantic waters, can be found from Massachusetts to Texas. During the warmer months of the year, juveniles and occasionally adults are sighted in sea grass beds off the eastern side of Long Island and free-swimming in pelagic environments. U.S. green sea turtles nest from Jun. through Sept. in the southeastern U.S.

**Diet:** Algae and sea grass. This makes their cartilage and fat green, giving them their name.

**Size & Lifespan:** Grow to 3 feet long and 350 lbs. On average, they live for 60-70 years.

### Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

Kemp's ridley sea turtles are the second most commonly seen sea turtle in NY. They're the smallest of the sea turtles and are identifiable by their heart-shaped carapace. Juveniles, between the ages of 2 and 5, can be found within shallow-benthic environments of Long Island Sound, Block Island Sound, Gardiner's Bay and Peconic Estuary, and less often in Jamaica Bay, lower NY Harbor & Great South Bay.

**Diet:** Powerful jaws help them crush crabs, clams, mussels, and shrimp. Also eat fish, sea urchins, and jellyfish.

**Size & Lifespan:** Grow to 2 feet long and up to 100 lbs. Live at least 30 years.

### Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Leatherback sea turtles are one of the largest reptiles on Earth. They get their name from their large, barrel-shaped body covered with leathery skin, as opposed to the hard, bony shells of other sea turtles. Leatherbacks are the most pelagic sea turtle and, due to their flexible shell. They are able to regulate their body temperature and travel farther north, giving them the largest range of any reptile species. Juveniles and adults forage along the east coast of the US and Canada, and their distributions and movements are believed

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**ABOVE:** Young otter being bottle fed. **INSERT:** Kathy Uhler holding young otter.

© Photos courtesy <http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/>

# “OTTERLY” AMAZING EXPERIENCE

by Kathy Uhler

*Director, Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Educational Center*

I became a licensed wildlife caretaker when I was in my early twenties. Since then, I have enjoyed caring for orphaned and injured animals of nearly every species native to PA. Literally thousands of squirrels, owls, rabbits, foxes, hawks and even bobcats and coyotes have been raised, healed and released back to the wild at Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center (PWRC) in the last four decades. Each species is special and requires knowledge and experience to provide the best care toward the goal of release back to wild freedom. After four decades there are few animal species that haven't been presented for care.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, a long-time acquaintance of mine found a baby River otter in the middle of a road in Brodheadsville, Monroe County. With no mother anywhere in sight, wearing gloves, he scooped the helpless youngster up and delivered her to the wildlife center. The six-week old fuzzy

brown pup weighed a mere two pounds, was dirty, had dozens of ticks and was dehydrated and thin. Following admission, the otter pup was provided with a physical examination, subcutaneous fluids and oral electrolytes to rehydrate her, ticks were removed, a shot of Vitamin B complex was administered and she had a quick bath. She was allowed to rest in a dark heated cage while formula was prepared.

River otters are the largest member of the weasel family in Pennsylvania. They are intelligent, active and charismatic. They feed mainly on fish, but catch frogs, crayfish and other small animals. Their population was decimated over the decades from over-harvesting, pollution and habitat destruction. Their last stable population was here in northeastern PA. As a student at East Stroudsburg University back in the early '80s, I knew the professor

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## “OTTERLY” AMAZING EXPERIENCE

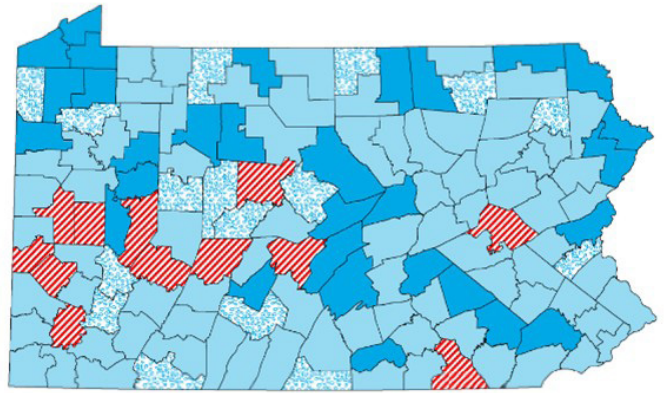
and primary students involved in researching methods of reintroducing otters to the parts of the state where they had disappeared and ultimately, reintroducing them in those regions. Thanks to Dr. Larry Rymon, Thomas Serfass and Tom Eveland, River otters now have healthy populations in most of the Commonwealth.

Baby otters require a formula that is high in fat and protein, but low in carbohydrates. At Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center we utilize special formulas made for individual species by a company named Fox Valley. By combining one such formula with a fat-boosting supplement, we created “baby otter formula”. Fluids were provided every few hours while the pup got stronger and started to voice her hunger for formula. We always start baby mammals on a quarter strength formula, and she accepted the bottle after only a moment’s fuss. By the second day, little Otter was sucking down half strength formula, and was active and vocal. Day three had the young super-weasel on full strength formula and enjoying her first short dip in a water basin. She gained about 2 ounces each day for the first few days.

The initial challenge of ensuring little Otter’s survival was accomplished but the next challenge was to find another orphaned otter with which to place her. Raising ANY animal without another of its species holds the risk of habituation, a situation where the animal may identify more with people than with its own species, reducing its ability to survive and breed in the wild. The risk is higher in birds than in mammals, but the concern is real with an otter because they are social creatures and are powerful predators that need to fear people. No other otter pups could be located, so a plan was made among the staff to reduce our contact with the otter as much as possible.

Little Otter was placed in a large cage in the bottom of our barn, which is unused except for some food storage. Only staff going in to feed or clean were permitted to enter, despite a crew of volunteers aching to bottle feed a baby otter. After a week of four bottles a day of formula, solid food was introduced. Small cut up fish were provided as well as fish flavored cat food. As the pup ate more solids, bottle feedings were cut to three per day. She became much more active and resisted being handled to clean her cage. She began swimming in a black utility mixing tub and doubled her weight in two weeks! Formula was offered in a dish mixed with fish flavored cat food. In addition, she was given cut up mice, and occasionally crayfish delivered by volunteers. It was time to move her to an outdoor enclosure.

River otters need quite a bit of space to exercise and swim. Although there are no dedicated otter enclosures at our facility, in mid-June, we modified a large enclosure we use for fawns, coyotes and other large mammals. A vinyl



© Chart / Photo courtesy <http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/>

**TOP:** Pennsylvania river otter distribution in 2010 based on surveys of Wildlife Conservation Officers. Subdivisions represent Wildlife Conservation Officer district boundaries.

**BOTTOM:**

floor was laid and a collapsible baby pool installed with a drain. Logs and other “furniture” and some indestructible toys were added for enrichment. A hide spot was provided and the otter was moved to her “pre-release” enclosure. Completely weaned from formula the now 12 week old otter weighed 5 ½ pounds, triple her weight from when she

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## “OTTERLY” AMAZING EXPERIENCE



© Photo courtesy <http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/>

arrived. Staff members Emily and Matt were charged with daily cleanings and providing fish and rodents to fuel the supercharged metabolism of a growing otter.

An animal requiring three or four fish a day can create a food supply problem. Members of the community provided fish from their angling adventures outdoors and, beginning in July, our neighbors at Cherry Valley Trout Hatchery donated live small trout for “live prey training”. The otter was a natural! She jumped into her pool and grabbed a fish, dragged it out and sat on her log downing her meal in a mere few minutes. Then back she went for another.

Day by day, the otter grew and began looking like an adult otter. Catching everything live that was put in her pool (fish, frogs and crayfish), we prepared for the next step: release. All the literature and information gathered about raising orphaned River otters indicated that release should be done at 10-11 months of age. This otter was approaching 6 months of age but 11 months would fall during the winter, a tough time for a single young otter to strike out on its own. She was approaching adult size at about 8 pounds and was becoming quite wild, so we began researching release locations in earnest.

A long-time friend and supporter, Jim Apgar, knows the backwoods of the Pocono region like the back of his hand. A perfect release site was located and we began to prepare not-so-little otter for her freedom day several miles from any human habitation. Near the end of August, during a

spell of clear dry weather, Emily and Matt contained the otter, who was weighed in her transport carrier (to prevent her handlers from bites and scratches) at just under 10 pounds. She was a big, powerful girl, who we estimate was about 27 inches plus a foot-long tail. We drove to a secluded location a good way down a dirt road, and walked her to the stream where she would make her life. Emily opened the carrier and the otter walked out, stood for a moment (this is the part where we hold our breath in worry that she might turn back toward us), then dove straight into the stream.

We watched for the better part of a half hour, as she explored, hunting for fish, climbing on logs partially submerged in the creek, diving and coming up fifty feet downstream, then swimming back again. Otters are incredibly intelligent, powerful and graceful creatures. Although we have not been back to check on her, our friend relates to us that he sees otter sign and we believe that this girl is happily living her life in the wild.

***It was one of the most gratifying experiences a wildlife rehabilitator could imagine!***

**Live Prey Training:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CI9Cv2tz5s>

**Release:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18ccsL8yudc>

**For More Information About PWRC:**

<http://www.poconowildlife.com/wp/>



## CAT OF MANY NAMES

### *interesting facts you may not know*

**Mountain Lion (*Puma concolor*)** is the largest cat in North America. Solitary and territorial, they are also terrific mothers - very protective and quick to lash out when they feel their offspring are in danger. I caught a glimpse of a mountain lion once years ago dashing across the road while driving late at night in a remote area in New York State (and we were told that there were no mountain lions in NYS).

My goal when creating **"Me and Mom"** was to increase awareness and give voice to the grace, spirit and strength of

this most elusive cat species.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Mountain Lions hold the record for the animal with the most names. They have over 40, including: *cougar*; *panther*; *cougar*; *puma*; *ghost cat*; *catamount*; and *mountain screamer*.

Today it is estimated that roughly 30,000 mountain lions live in the mountains of the western US. The range of a mountain lion depends heavily on abundance of prey, terrain, and vegetation. Male lions have a range of roughly 100 square miles;

females about 50 square miles. Sub-adults are often transient until they find unoccupied territories.

Females weigh 85 to 120 lbs; males 120-180 lbs. They measure 7 to 8 feet from nose to tail and stand 2 to 3 feet at shoulder. Lifespan in the wild is 8 to 10 years.

**INTERESTING FACT:** Mountain lions are the largest cats that can purr.

Mountain lions are capable of running at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour and can leap 15 feet up into a tree. They are skilled climbers and frequently dwell in trees.

Females breed at two years, after they establish their territory. Gestation is 92 days and they give birth every two years. Most litters consist of 2-4 cubs/kittens. Cubs usually have spots for 1 year which disappear as they age. Litter mates will travel together for several months. Only about 1 in 6 cubs survive to adulthood.

Mountain lions prefer to avoid encounters with human beings, and attacks are rare. In the last 100 years, there have been less than 20 fatal mountain lion attacks. They can be seen any time but are most active at dusk and dawn.

Male mountain lions that come into contact with each other will hiss and spit until one backs down. If neither backs down, they may have a violent conflict.

Mature mountain lions are not preyed upon by other species in the wild, though they may have conflicts with predators and scavengers, such as wolves and bears.

Excellent hunters, they prey primarily on elk and deer. Full grown mountain lions require 8 to 10 lbs of meat per day to survive. They often have to compete with gray wolves and bears for resources in their territories. In an area where wolves are prevalent, the mountain lion may have to kill much more prey than usual because it gets chased from its prey by the pack.

Mountain lions can live at elevations of up to 10,000 feet.

**Yoke Bauer DiGiorgio**  
**Wildlife Artist / Co-Founder and**  
**Editor Nature's Newsletter /**  
**Co-founder and Director DVEA**

#### **RESOURCES:**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cougar>  
<https://www.mountainlion.org/>  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/c/cougar/>  
<https://www.visitbigsky.com/blog/interesting-facts-about-mountain-lions/>



*"Uncertain Future in the Wild" (Red Wolf), 2019, acrylic on Belgian linen, 72 x 60 inches*

© Ester Curini, Painter

## GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

by Ester Curini  
*Photorealistic Painter*

***Ester Curini is a self-taught painter born in Italy, and living and working in Brooklyn, New York. Known for creating photorealistic animal portraits (wild, domesticated and farm) set against stark white backgrounds, she is able to concentrate on her subjects giving them a strong and powerful voice. Animals need that voice Ester has exhibited in many notable domestic galleries and museums and has been featured in domestic and international publications.***

I grew up in a small town in northern Italy, Casale Monferrato, surrounded by rolling hills full of vineyards and wheat fields. As a child, I was completely in awe of animals.

I would eagerly listen to the swallows chirping as they do acrobatic flights in a crystal clear blue sky, watch a stray

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## GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS



© Ester Curini, Painter  
“The Cat of Many Names” (Mountain Lion), 2018, acrylic on Belgian linen, 72 x 60 inches

cat enjoying the sun lying in the courtyard. It was always a highlight to go to the countryside with my parents where I would see farm animals and wildlife.

Innately, I sketched their likeness on any piece of paper I could find. In these peaceful moments, there were times when I witnessed terrible harm being brought to these animals and felt powerless. The pain of moments is still with me today: the harmless were harmed. I witnessed this and made a solid pledge to protect these animals when I got older. Now, I have learned that giving them a voice with my portraits is the fiercest way I can do this.

So, I've kept my promise. My portraits urge for empathy toward each of these animals. Animals are, and always have been, my driving force and inspiration. I am passionate about wildlife and habitat conservation. Through my art, I aim to raise awareness of endangered species and to inspire viewers to take action to protect these animals. I continue to love spending time with animals either in open fields or through barriers in reputable sanctuaries as the Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem, NY. In these safe spaces, I observe the animals I will eventually paint and become familiar with their personalities. I will then convey their joy, individuality, and sentience in my portraits

of them.

During these meetings, which are the actual starting point of my artistic process I draw sketches and I take photographs that I later use as a reference for my paintings. The time I spend with them, allows me to learn and then paint their unique energy, essence, and spirit.

Although I continue to be inspired to paint every kind of animal, in recent years I have been focused on the most endangered and threatened predators in North America. I am focusing on predators because they are completely disappearing from our landscape due to habitat loss and conflicts with humans who are fearful of personal attacks and loss of livestock.

The mountain lion depicted in “The Cat of Many Names” is among the threatened North American species. But, wolves are particularly critical to the ecosystem and are extremely endangered.



© Ester Curini, Painter  
“I Was Wild. They Named Me OR4” (Gray Wolf), 2017, acrylic on Belgian linen, 72 x 48 inches

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## GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS



© Ester Curini, Painter  
*"Through the Eyes of a Mexican Gray Wolf"* (Mexican Gray Wolf), 2019, acrylic on Belgian linen, 60 x 72 inches

The Wolf Conservation Center - [nywolf.org](http://nywolf.org) - is one of my favorite places. I had a life-changing experience when I first visited in 2012. It is home to two of the most endangered wolves in the world; the Red Wolf (*Canis Rufus*) with only 7 Red wolves remaining in the wild as of Oct. 2020, depicted in the painting "Uncertain Future in the Wild", and the Mexican Gray Wolf (*Canis Lupus Baileyi*) with only 163 Mexican Gray wolves remaining in the wild, depicted in the painting "Through the Eyes of a Mexican Gray Wolf".

The portrait "I Was Wild. They Named me OR4" depicts a very resilient and tenacious wild wolf of the Imnaha pack in Oregon, who bravely escaped may kill orders and poachers. Sadly, this wolf was murdered in 2014.

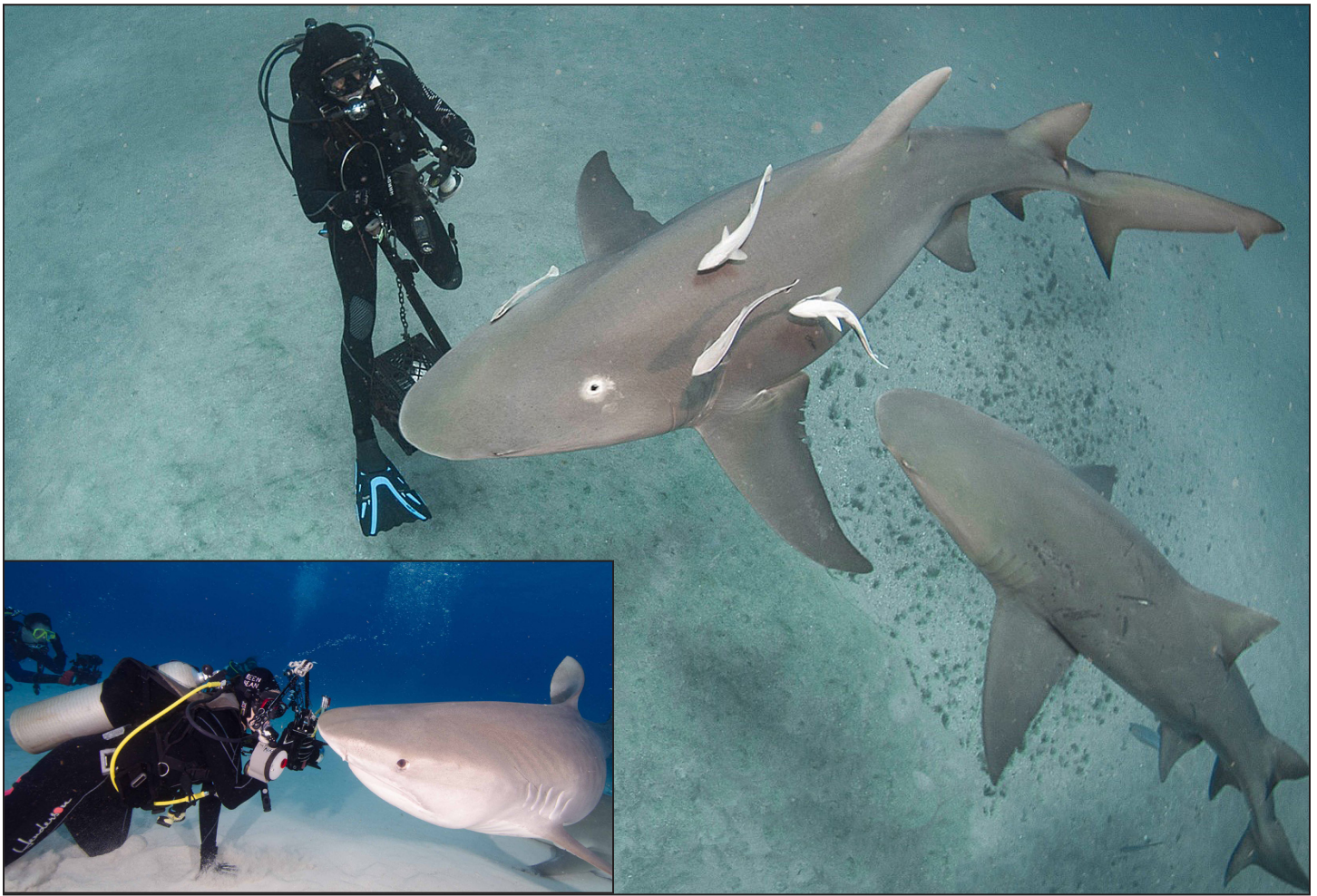
In my portraits, each of my subjects is isolated on a white background. This is to put them in the main role rather than in a supporting one, to give them a strong and powerful voice. They need that voice, now more than ever, because the annihilation of wildlife has become a global emergency that threatens humans too.

Presently, I am here in Brooklyn, New York, in my studio painting the next portrait of an animal. By my side is Pepe who is my poodle and studio assistant. During my painting sessions, every now and then, the sound of jazz music is overlapped by the song of the birds outside and I smile knowing that I am keeping my promise.

For more information:  
[www.estercurini.com](http://www.estercurini.com)



© Ester Curini, Painter  
*Ester Curini and Pepe, her poodle, next to the painting "I Am the Lobo"* (Mexican Gray Wolf), 2016, acrylic on Belgian linen, 72 x 48 inches



ABOVE: Shark handler, Josh Eccles offering a local lemon shark a sharkie snack. This lemon shark was either shot from a boat or a diver hit it with a "bang stick".  
 INSERT: Lureen Ferretti photographing a curious tiger shark.

# DIVING WITH SHARKS

## From Fear to Admiration and Respect

by Lureen Ferretti

*Nature Photographer / Underwater Photojournalist / President South Florida Underwater Photography Society*

Despite doing my first "shark dive" in 2014, I still recall it as if it were yesterday it was an equal mix of fear and excitement. Before relenting and reserving my dive, I watched in awe of the amazing photos' my friends had been posting for years. Having been taught not to feed wild animals, I just knew that feeding sharks was a recipe for disaster. Much to my surprise, none of the photogs had ever been bitten. Knowing that neither the dive operators nor my friends would stop just because of my beliefs, I reluctantly decided to join them. Nervous and not wanting to try this act of insanity alone, I convinced a friend to join me – I am SO glad I did!!! Several days before my scheduled dive, photos were posted of lemon, bull, and tiger sharks. LEMONS and BULLS and TIGERS – OH MY! I quickly referred to my REEF Fish ID book, it confirmed my fears, bull and tiger sharks were listed as aggressive

toward divers. If I hadn't talked my friend into joining me, I would have canceled!

Kneeling on the ocean floor in 70 feet of water, surrounded by 50-60 lemons sharks, every attempt to take a photo was thwarted by the big toothy grin of a goofy lemon shark with no personal space heading right for me. After being forced to duck repeatedly to avoid them swimming into me, I finally figured out how to stay in place and when they approached close enough, I gently guided them over me. Watching them reminded me of Mr. Magoo. If you're unfamiliar with Mr. Magoo, he was a cartoon character who had very poor eyesight, wandered aimlessly and narrowly avoided mischief at every turn. The sharks seemed to have the same characteristics - poor depth perception and zero personal

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## DIVING WITH SHARKS From Fear to Admiration and Respect



© Lureen Ferretti, Photographer  
*Snooty, the lemon shark Ambassador in South Florida, she loves to be the center of attention.*

space frequently bumping into each other, the photogs, and our strobes. Within 5 minutes after experiencing their true character my tension, fear, and apprehension dissipated and turned to amusement, admiration, and respect. If only everyone could see what I'm seeing they would no longer fear them. They are big, curious fish, swimming around, checking out the action. My interactions with the bull and tiger sharks were similar. Once again, proceeding with caution, I watched in awe. They are curious and cautious, often circling the action from afar and when (AND IF) they feel comfortable, they move in closer to investigate.

It's easy to understand the misconceptions considering the way movies and tales from fishermen/spearfishermen portray them to have a violent, devious demeanor. I concur when you introduce a bleeding flailing fish, their behavior changes instantly. Their calm nature is replaced with fast swimming, erratic movements and when they grab the fish they begin thrashing violently. The on-land equivalent would be putting a steak on the grill, scenting the surrounding air with that delicious aroma and ringing the dinner bell (for meat eaters, of course). When the sharks detect the erratic patterns, fish make when caught on a line and detect fish blood in the water, that is their dinner bell and they happily oblige by swimming over to eat THEIR food. This is another area of contention with fisher/spearfishermen, they mistakenly think the shark is coming to take "their" (the fisherman's) catch. They will fight with, often injure and occasionally kill the shark to keep the catch. We must remember, we are guests in their home and need to respect that and them.

Lazy, opportunistic feeders', sharks are content with eating dead/dying prey which makes a fish on a line the closest thing to fast food for them. Considering they only have teeth to grab their food, it may seem aggressive when they grab a fish on a line and thrash about but that is all they have to work with. I challenge you go an entire day without

using your hands to eat. Pick up and eat your food with just your mouth and see how similar your actions are.

Sharks urgently need our help, they are hunted for their fins for use in shark fin soup (considered a sign of wealth and a delicacy in China), culled off the shores of Australia, caught as by catch, hunted for sport in other parts of the world and now drug manufacturers may begin harvesting them for COVID-19 vaccines.

Ironically, I've been an avid diver for over 30 years and was not aware that "humans" kill over 1 MILLION sharks per year (that is not a typo). 1 million is the reported number however the actual number (based on reported and illegal shark catches) is believed to be closer to 273 MILLION! Compare that to the 5 humans killed worldwide in 2019 by sharks. Due to destruction of their nurseries, long reproduction times/low reproduction rates, ocean pollution and targeted slaughtering we are killing them too quickly for them to reproduce fast enough to maintain sustainable numbers. Most sharks are listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) but Oceanic White tips and scalloped hammerheads are classified as critically endangered (CR) meaning they are at an extremely high risk of extinction within the near future if swift action is not taken.

I was eluded to think that my home state of Florida had great laws to protect sharks however now that I understand the fine print I realize they don't. As an example, shark finning is illegal in state waters (waters up to 3 miles off of the coast) however catching and "landing" a shark within those waters is legal. In other words, catching and killing sharks IS allowed, you must bring them to shore "land them" before killing them.

Ironically, as I was writing this article, I was initially excited to read the headlines "Governor DeSantis signs measure



© Lureen Ferretti, Photographer  
*Jenny, one of our "regulars" tiger shark, is all about the food but makes her rounds to all of the divers for close up shots.*

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## DIVING WITH SHARKS From Fear to Admiration and Respect

banning import and export of shark fins – Florida Politics”. After reading the details provided in the article, sadly the headline was misleading. While a step in the right direction, it is not a complete ban of shark fin sales/export. Here is an excerpt “*The U.S. has outlawed shark finning, but not trading in those fins. The fins are considered a delicacy by some and can be highly sought after at restaurants and can be ground into a powder for soup.*”

*The newly-signed measure does permit the “sale of shark fins by any commercial fisherman who harvested sharks from a vessel holding a valid federal shark fishing permit on January 1, 2020” as well as “the export and sale of shark fins by any wholesale dealer holding a valid federal Atlantic shark dealer permit on January 1, 2020.”*

*Commercial fishermen had pushed back against the bill, arguing a full ban would hamper their ability to catch sharks for other purposes. Those fishermen argued fins taken from sharks caught for other purposes should be allowed to be traded.*

For the full story, please refer to this link - <https://floridapolitics.com/archives/368248-governor-signs-measure-shark-fins>

As a result, I've become an activist and encourage you to do the same. There are many ways to help – financial donations are always needed and appreciated but if you're unable to donate money, you can donate your time by participating in activities led by Shark Conversation groups, vacation in areas that have established Shark Sanctuaries (designated areas restricting commercial fishing operations from retaining caught sharks).

Vacationing in areas that have established shark sanctuaries is a great way to show your support. Realizing the importance of sharks to their marine ecosystem as well as the financial benefits, Palau was the first place in the world to establish a shark sanctuary. In addition to diving with and likely seeing gray reef, blacktip and white tip sharks you will also be surrounded by abundant marine life – Hump head wrasse that grow as big as and often larger than the sharks, jacks swirling in a tornado formation from the ocean floor to the surface, batteries of barracuda, and so many tropical fish you'll feel like a bobble head as your look from side to side taking it all in.

Palau is a beautiful, unique place that offers marine and land lovers alike fascinating rich landscapes teeming with life. If you like the little stuff, just beneath the rocks at Sam's Tours dock you will be treated to the mandarin fish's nightly ritual. As the sun begins to set, they pop out from under the rocks they hide under during the day to mate. Each male has a harem of females that he diligently swims around checking in with to see who is ready to spawn. When one



TOP / CENTER / BOTTOM © Lureen Ferretti, Photographer  
TOP: Photo of a gray reef shark followed by a school of jacks. CENTER: Moon photographing a Jack-nado. BOTTOM: A nightly show - Mandarin fish rising into the water column to spawn. (These photos were taken in Palau)

of his ladies is ready they rise up into the water column and in a split second she releases her eggs, he quickly fertilizes them and both quickly return to the protection of the rocks to avoid being eaten by predators. As you can imagine,

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## DIVING WITH SHARKS From Fear to Admiration and Respect



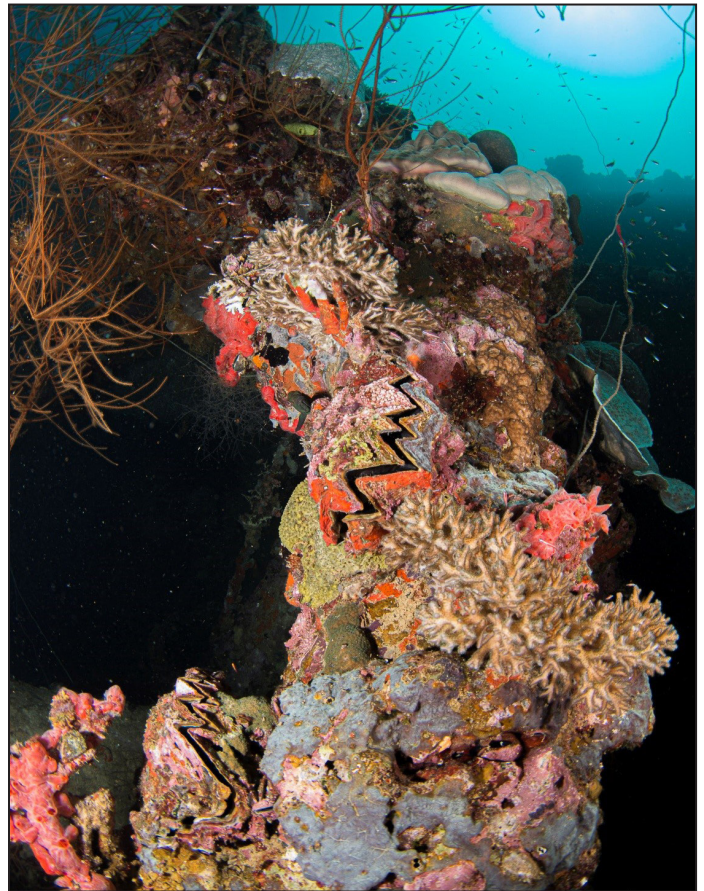
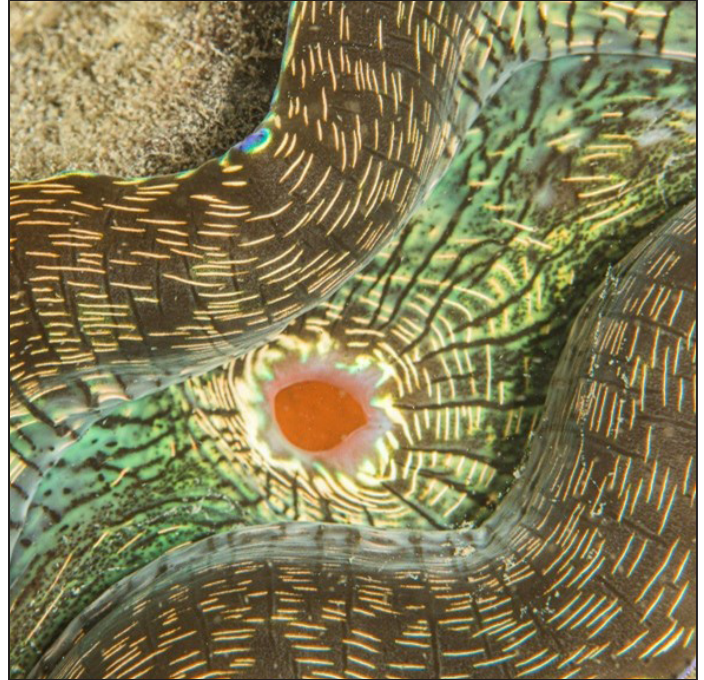
© Lureen Ferretti, Photographer  
*A dapper and picturesque Salariax ceramensis blenny poses in an empty clam shell. (More photos from Palau)*

males are known to wander into another males' territory causing a turf war.

For World War II buffs, there are plenty of wrecks littering the ocean floor. Likely the most famous wreck in Palau is the Iro wreck. At 470 feet long, resting in 130 feet of water with the deck at about 85 feet below the surface the marine life wasted no time establishing their home. The ship is covered with layers of growth - multiple species of anemones can be found as well as large clams and tons of tropical fish.

For nature loving land lubbers, non-divers or divers needing a surface interval, exploring the unique Rock Island formations by kayak is a must. Simply visit Sam's Tours and they will coordinate everything including lunch on the transport boat for you. Depending on the time of the year, you can see the fins of baby black tip reef sharks zipping along the surface of the water and see them just below the surface. If you stay calm and very still while snorkeling in the crystal-clear water, you may be able to earn the sharks trust, so they feel comfortable swimming close to you. There are hidden lakes and bat caves to explore depending on how much time you have, and which tour you choose. No visit to Palau would be complete without visiting Jellyfish Lake. It is the only place in the world where ocean jelly fish were cut off from the ocean and have lost the painful stinging sensation caused when accidentally coming in contact with them.

After seeing it's success, The Maldives followed in 2010, the Marshall Islands, Honduras, and The Bahamas in

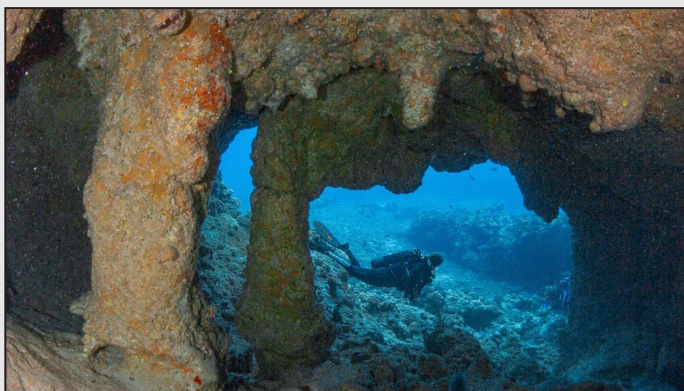


© Lureen Ferretti, Photographer  
**TOP:** It's common to see giant clams with brightly colored iridescent mantels.  
**BOTTOM:** The Teshio Maru is another commonly visited wreck in Palau

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## DIVING WITH SHARKS From Fear to Admiration and Respect

### ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUREEN FERRETI



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**LEFT (Top to Bottom):** Watching the parade of sharks in the Maldives; Channel diving in French Polynesia; One small section of the channel, there are more sharks deeper and throughout the channel; French Polynesia Fakarava South Pass channel. **RIGHT (Top to Bottom):** Manta madness in the Maldives; French Polynesia Fakarava South Pass channel.

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## DIVING WITH SHARKS From Fear, to Admiration and Respect

2011, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia in 2012, New Caledonia in 2013, The British Virgin Islands in 2014, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, The Cayman Islands, Bonaire, and Saba in 2015, St. Maarten in 2016, Dominican Republic in 2017 and most recently Samoa in 2018. As you can see by some of the photos here, all locations have extraordinary marine life and land-based activities.

The Maldives and French Polynesia both offer – you guessed it – sharks, abundant marine life, “channel diving” and extremely healthy reef dives. Whale Sharks, mantas, spotted eagle rays, and multiple species of sharks swimming about you just never know what you will encounter on a channel dive. It is highly recommended that you are at least an Advanced Level diver with good air consumption and buoyancy control. Referred to as channel dives because you dive in the channel between two land masses most commonly right before/during incoming or outgoing tide. The water flows very quickly through the channel bringing with it rich nutrients and tons of marine life.

COVID-19 is putting a damper on many of our travel plans but you can take action from the comfort and safety of your own home. Another impactful action you can take to protect sharks is to educate yourself on the current laws regarding the marine environment, follow proposed laws (read the fine print) and contact your local government to urge them to pass and enforce laws to protect sharks. One of the local organizations that I follow and support is the American Shark Conservancy [www.americansharkconservancy.org](http://www.americansharkconservancy.org). You can search for local organizations in your area or if you prefer to support larger, long standing non-profits take a look at what:

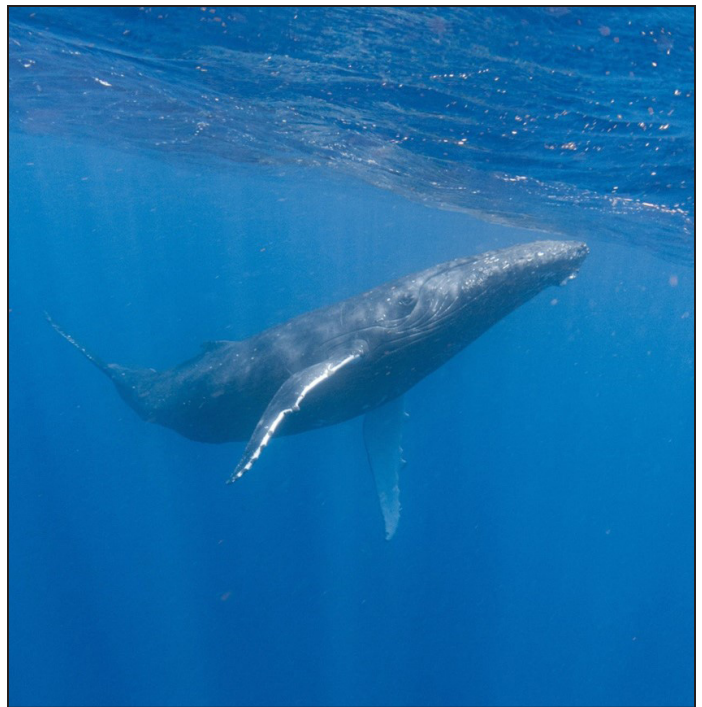
- Oceana / [Oceana.org](http://Oceana.org);
- Shark Savers / [Shark-Savers.com](http://Shark-Savers.com);
- Project Aware Foundation / [ProjectAware.org](http://ProjectAware.org);
- Sea Shepherd / [SeaShepherd.org](http://SeaShepherd.org);
- Shark Angels / [SharkAngels.org](http://SharkAngels.org);
- Shark Research Institute / [www.sharks.org](http://www.sharks.org).

are working on and reach out to them to see how you can help.

*Six years later, I continue to admire and respect them. I've skipped across the globe several times now to dive with and photograph sharks from all around the world. I've only grown to admire them more. Please join me in taking action to protect them!*

For more information, please contact Lureen at:

<https://www.facebook.com/LureenFerrettiPhotography/>  
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TOP / CENTER: Land based photos from Palau  
BOTTOM: Humpback whale, Moorea, French Polynesia

# SAVING HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE IN OUR CITIES

by Barbara Russo  
Naturalist

We share our cities with wildlife. Everything from squirrels to bees to birds and other ecologically important species call our cities home, and they need certain natural habitat to survive. As our cities continue to development, much of that habitat is lost. So, this begs the question for urban animal lovers: Is there anything we can do to help save habitat for wildlife in our cities? The answer is yes, and the ways to do so are easier than you might think.

Creating healthy habitat for native wildlife starts in our yards. Whether you own a sprawling acre of land or a small balcony outside of a downtown apartment, there are simple things you can do to help local wildlife feel more at home in a bustling metropolis. We spoke to some wildlife and plant experts who helped us create a list simple ways to make your yard a thriving habitat for our furry, feathered and multi-legged friends in nature.

## Put out a Bird Feeder

One of the easiest things you can do to help local wildlife is to put out a bird feeder to attract an array of migratory and nonmigratory birds throughout the year. Don't have much space for a bird feeder? That's ok! Leaving out seed heads can also be an important food source for birds during winter months, according to Alan Pieluszynski, Native Plant Society of Staten Island Board Member (a nonprofit that works to provide information and engage in public education and advocacy about the ecological importance of native flora).

Consider putting out some water, like a bird bath, so animals have something to wash down those seeds. *"In the non-winter months put out a water source, like a bird bath,"* Pieluszynski recommends. *"Bees and birds appreciate a nice bath or drink during the hot summer months."*

## Take Care of Your Soil

When it comes time for seasonal pruning, don't throw it all away. Leave some flower stems intact so small bees and wasps can create nesting cavities. And remember that your garden is a perfect spot for wildlife to live, grow and thrive. *"Mulch your garden with your own cutback debris,"* says Pieluszynski. *"Take care of your soil since that's where the most organisms in your garden reside. A healthy soil bed has tons of microorganisms in it, providing various functional benefits for your garden."*

## Create Cover

Small mammals are always at risk of being caught by predators such as hawks, eagles and other birds of prey. Without a lot of cover around, how can a rabbit or squirrel



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## SAVING HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE IN OUR CITIES



© Pete Rossi, Photographer

hide from danger? Help them out by planting shrubs and trees in your yard.

*"Planting shrubs and trees creates cover that would make these animals more comfortable to venture into your garden," says Pieluszynski. "If you have trees - most notably oaks - then most likely you will have squirrels even in urban environments."*

### Plant Native

Speaking of planting trees, consider planting native greenery in your yard. According to David Mizejewski, National Wildlife Federation Naturalist and author of *Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife*, wildlife rely on the native plants found in nature for survival, as they provide natural sources of food, cover and places to raise young. Without all of this, populations decline.

*"Most of our typical garden plants are non-natives that don't support wildlife, but more and more native plants are becoming available. Also, seek out a local native plant nursery and ask for natives at your local garden center," recommends Mizejewski. Additionally, plant your garden so it's full of diverse colors, flowers and patterns. "A lot of butterflies and moths have specific host plants," Pieluszynski says. "The best example would be milkweeds (Asclepias spp.) and monarch butterflies. A female Monarch will only lay its egg on milkweed plants and other butterflies and moths will have different host plants."*

### Plant Densely

Go wild with your landscaping! Mimic Mother Nature's design by planting densely to provide hiding places for wildlife. Much like creating cover, dense vegetation provides great hideouts for prey species. *"Birds and other small animals hide out in vegetation and use it as safe corridors through our neighborhoods," says Mizejewski. "Try to reduce the amount of area covered in lawn, which provides no cover or other habitat. Instead, create a living fence by planting shrubs along your property line, plant more trees or create a perennial bed packed with native wildflower and grasses."*

### Ditch the Pesticides

Our experts agree that the most important thing to do at home to protect species is to ditch pesticides and insecticides. They are harmful to wildlife. *"Don't use them in your garden," says Mizejewski. "Instead, rely on tried-and-true organic gardening techniques. And remember, a natural garden filled with native plants rarely has pest problems."*

***Interested in learning more? Visit the following sites to get more information on creating backyard habitat and how you can help protect urban wildlife:***

**Native Plant Society of Staten Island:**

<https://nativeplantsocietyofstatenisland.org/?fbclid=IwAR0FUUOUBWxABwptsJVV01orhAoJ3sUYx5ipyW-1tMpMSgIdb7qSZB9kY>

**National Wildlife Federation:**

<https://www.nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/create>

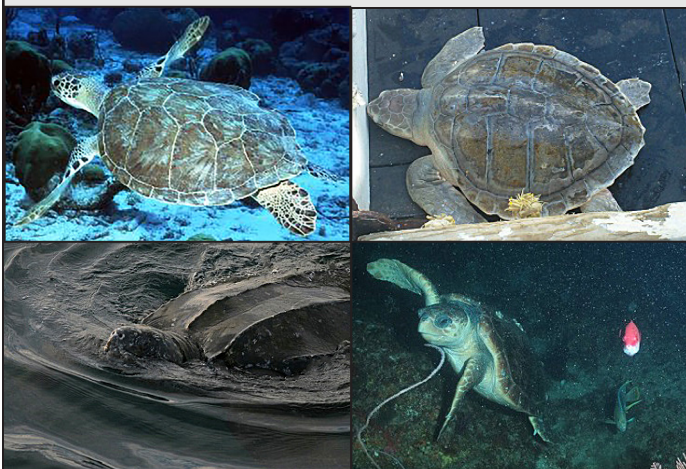
**New York Botanical Garden's Plant Information Office:**

<https://www.nybg.org/learn/mertz-library/plant-information/>

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## DISCOVERING NATURE

### SEA TURTLES OF NEW YORK



© Photographs provided by NOAA

**TOP: Left** - Green sea turtle; **Right** - Kemp's ridley sea turtle.

**BOTTOM: Left** - Leatherback sea turtle; **Right** - Loggerhead sea turtle.

to correlate with seasonally abundant prey. Leatherbacks are often seen on the south shore of Long Island, in the NY Bight region, and within the Long Island Sound.

**Diet:** Primarily jellyfish. Their throats' are lined with backward facing spines to help retain their food.

**Size & Lifespan:** Grow to 6 feet long and up to 2,000 lbs. Their lifespan is currently unknown.

#### Loggerhead Sea Turtles (*Caretta caretta*)

Loggerhead sea turtles are the most frequently seen sea turtle in NY waters, though they inhabit different regions during different parts of their lives. Juveniles are frequently found in nearshore bays and Long Island Sound, while other age groups, including adults, are found up to 40+ miles off the southern Long Island coast. As juveniles age into adults, their habitat preferences shift to more shallow water habitats with open ocean access, such as the Florida Bay.

**Diet:** Shellfish (horseshoe crabs, spider crabs, clams, and mussels)

**Size & Lifespan:** Grow to 3 feet long and up about 250 lbs. They live between 70-80 years old.

Sea turtles remain local to NY from approximately May through Nov. and are particularly fond of the warmer waters in coastal bays and the Long Island Sound. By the end of Nov., they begin their migration south to warmer nesting waters.

Sea turtles that you see on shore in NY are cold-stunned and need immediate attention. Do not touch the turtles. Instead, call the stranding hotline at (631) 369-9829.

#### Resources / More Information:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NYSDEC/bulletins/2ad2cae>

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/112355.html>

[https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish\\_marine\\_pdf/dmrnysgmarinewildlife.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/dmrnysgmarinewildlife.pdf)

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html>

Learn more about what the New York Marine Rescue Center and Atlantic Marine Conservation Society do to help sea turtles at:

<http://nymarinerescue.org/>

<https://www.amseas.org/>

## THE DELAWARE VALLEY EAGLE ALLIANCE

*working towards the conservation of  
our wildlife and natural resources*

*The Delaware Valley Eagle Alliance is a 501 (C)(3) not-for-profit organization with a mission to increase awareness, understanding and promote conservation of our wildlife and the natural environment. We accomplish this through our publications, projects and programs.*

*We believe that raising awareness and understanding will change attitudes toward conservation and our natural resources.*

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Richard Crandall, Director and Vice President  
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