ATC Conservation and Trail Management
Guidance on Wildlife Management

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail volunteer maintaining clubs ("Clubs") and other public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (known as ANST, A.T., or "the Trail"). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies.

Overview

The natural habitats along the Appalachian Trail support a great variety of wildlife. In most cases, the narrowness of the Trail corridor precludes management practices that will significantly enhance habitat to a point of improving a species' over-all health, distribution, or range. However, in areas where there is increasing pressure from development, the corridor may provide an important source of forage and cover that sustains populations of small mammals and birds. The corridor can provide critical nest and den sites for species such as eagles, hawks, falcons, and waterfowl. The Appalachian Mountain ridgeline is also an important flyway for the migration of raptors. Several significant observation points, such as Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, are located along the Trail.

Guidance

ATC does not have a formal policy regarding wildlife management. In general, ATC is supportive of agency programs and practices for maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, provided these activities do not conflict with primary Trail purposes. ATC provides information on sites along the Appalachian Trail where exceptional wildlife viewing opportunities exist to the authors of state wildlife viewing guides. The A.T. MEGA-Transect program includes wildlife monitoring.

NPS Policy—The National Park Service policy is to perpetuate native species (those that occur due to natural processes and not species that have been moved into the area). Natural processes are relied upon to regulate populations of native species to the greatest extent possible. Nonnative species are not allowed to displace native species if this displacement can be prevented by management. Native animal life in the NPS system is protected against harvest, removal, destruction, harassment, or harm through human action, except where (1) hunting or trapping are permitted by law; (2) fishing is permitted by law for either sport or commercial use or is not specifically prohibited; (3) control of specific populations of wildlife is required for the maintenance of a healthy park ecosystem; or (4) removal or control of animals is necessary to safeguard human health and safety.

<u>Considerations for Planning</u>
Inventory—Clubs may wish to identify important habitats and exceptional wildlife-viewing areas. They may want to participate in wildlife monitoring projects with ATC or their agency partners. Club members should be aware of state hunting seasons and regulations, and may wish to contact state wildlife officials to ensure that they are aware of the status of hunting on Trail lands.

Setting Trail Club Policy—A Trail club policy statement on wildlife simply needs to recognize the jurisdictions of the land-managing agencies and indicate general club policy on measures to improve habitat on A.T. lands.

Action Plan—Unless the Trail club plans to undertake an open areas project for wildlife habitat improvement, no action is necessary.

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at www.appalachiantrail.org, or P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425-807.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

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ATC HEADQUARTERS