

About the Pennsylvania Game Commission

For more than 100 years, the Game Commission has managed the Commonwealth's wildlife resources for all Pennsylvanians. Wildlife has always been an important part of Pennsylvania's cultural heritage and is considered a state treasure.

But back in the late 1800s our wildlife started to disappear as a result of deforestation, pollution and unregulated hunting and trapping. From this dark period emerged the Game Commission, created by the State Legislature to protect and conserve wildlife, which was then commonly referred to as "game." The wildlife diversity we enjoy today is due to the agency's wildlife management programs and support from countless Pennsylvanians and outdoors organizations.

Funded primarily by hunting and furtaker license sales, State Game Lands timber, mineral and oil/gas revenues, and a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, the Commission is almost entirely supported by hunters and trappers, or assets that have been procured with license dollars.

Wildlife Management

The Commission is responsible for managing all of Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals. [Wildlife management](#) is the process used to manage game and other wildlife populations, and includes: monitoring wildlife populations; establishing laws and regulations; setting seasons and bag limits; making habitat improvements; providing outright protection; informing and educating the public; and assessing public expectations and satisfaction.

The Commonwealth's [white-tailed deer](#), [black bear](#) and [wild turkey](#) populations serve as excellent examples of successful wildlife management. Although each species is hunted, today they inhabit the state in record numbers as a result of Commission programs involving trap-and-transfer work, habitat improvement, research and regulated seasons and bag limits. Pennsylvania currently is home to more deer, bear and turkeys than when colonists first arrived. Elk also are doing incredibly well. [Pennsylvania's elk](#) population is larger now than at any other time in the past 150 years. Its success has been a direct result of modern wildlife management.

One of the agency's more visible examples of wildlife management is species reintroductions. The Commission successfully has reintroduced beavers, river otters, elk, [bald eagles](#), fishers, ospreys and [peregrine falcons](#). Your chance of seeing one of these species is greater today than ever because of these efforts.

Other examples of wildlife management include managing [endangered and threatened species](#); constructing and placing nest structures for bluebirds, peregrine falcons and wood ducks; gating caves to protect important bat colonies; performing field studies on wildlife; and conducting wildlife censuses and surveys. Recent field studies have centered on endangered [Indiana bats](#) and the prolific [white-tailed deer](#). Some of the wildlife research being conducted by the Game Commission is garnering national attention in the field of wildlife management.

Wildlife Protection

Wildlife protection is conducted by a force comprising about 200 full-time Wildlife Conservation Officers and more than 500 Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers. A full-time officer's area of responsibility is about 350 square miles; deputies help patrol it. Wildlife Conservation Officer duties include: enforcing hunting and trapping laws to protect wildlife; investigating hunting accidents; conducting wildlife surveys; assisting in wildlife research projects; and providing educational programs. Officers are uniformed and have received extensive law enforcement and wildlife management training.

All full-time officers are graduates of the Game Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation, America's first game protector or warden school. More than 500 officers have graduated from the school since it was established in 1936.

Wildlife Habitat Management

The Commission is deeply involved in Wildlife Habitat Management, because it's one of the most effective and important ways to manage wildlife. To ensure wild animals always have food and shelter, the agency, since 1920, has been purchasing lands for inclusion in its State Game Lands system, which currently contains about 300 separate tracts comprising a total of more than 1.4 million acres.

Information and Education

The Commission publishes [Pennsylvania Game News](#) and a variety of books and brochures, and produces top-quality videos such as [On the Trail of Pennsylvania's Black Bears](#), [Pennsylvania Whitetails - Living With Change](#) and [Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies](#).

With the help of 3,000 volunteer instructors, the agency annually trains about 40,000 students in its [Hunter-Trapper Education Program](#). The agency also offers a Bowhunter Education Program to further promote safe and responsible bowhunting.

The Commission coordinates Pennsylvania's Project WILD program, which provides factual information concerning wildlife and habitat to hundreds of thousands of students. The statewide Project WILD network has 12,000 certified instructors, many of whom are school teachers.

In addition, the agency promotes the [Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program](#). BOW provides interested women with a means to acquire or sharpen outdoors skills such as shooting, hunting, fishing and orienteering.