

# Executive Summary

The Endangered Species Act is America's foremost biodiversity conservation law. Its purpose is to prevent the extinction of America's most imperiled plants and animals, increase their numbers, and effect their full recovery and removal from the endangered list. Currently 1,312 species in the United States are entrusted to its protection. Historically, 1,350 have been listed.

Opinions abound on whether and to what degree the Act has accomplished its goals. Most are politically driven, some are anecdotal, and a few attempt to wring long-term implications from short-term data. None, however, ask or answer the questions most fundamental to measuring the Act's effectiveness: Are species increasing or decreasing in number since being placed on the endangered species list? Are they progressing toward recovery in a timeline consistent with their federal recovery plans?

In this report we present population trend data, recovery plan reviews, and narrative accounts for all endangered species that historically or currently occur in eight northeastern states: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey. We find that the Endangered Species Act has been remarkably successful in the region.

## **Measures of Success:**

- Preventing extinction: 100% successful
- Stabilizing and moving species toward recovery: 93% successful
- Meeting recovery timelines: approximately 82% successful

## **Time Needed for Recovery:**

- On average, federal recovery plans expected recovery to take 42 years, while species have been listed for an average of only 24 years.
- Only 11 federal recovery plans expected recovery by 2005. In practice, nine species were downlisted, under review, formally proposed, or completely delisted due to achieving recovery by 2005.