

FISCAL 2023-24

Annual Report



PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

FISCAL 2023-24

Annual Report

PRESENTED BY THE
PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE
01 **INTRODUCTION**

PAGE
04 **GOAL 1**
PROACTIVELY MANAGE WILDLIFE

PAGE
11 **GOAL 2**
CONSERVE WILDLIFE HABITATS

PAGE
17 **GOAL 3**
SUPPORT PENNSYLVANIA'S HUNTING, TRAPPING,
AND CONSERVATION HERITAGE

PAGE
24 **GOAL 4**
EXPAND AGENCY RELEVANCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

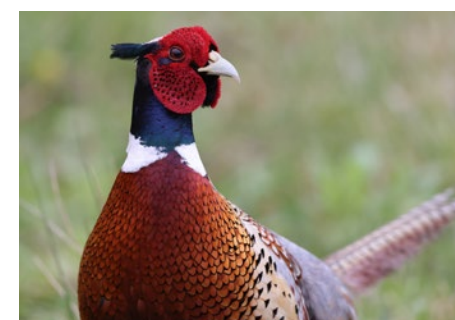
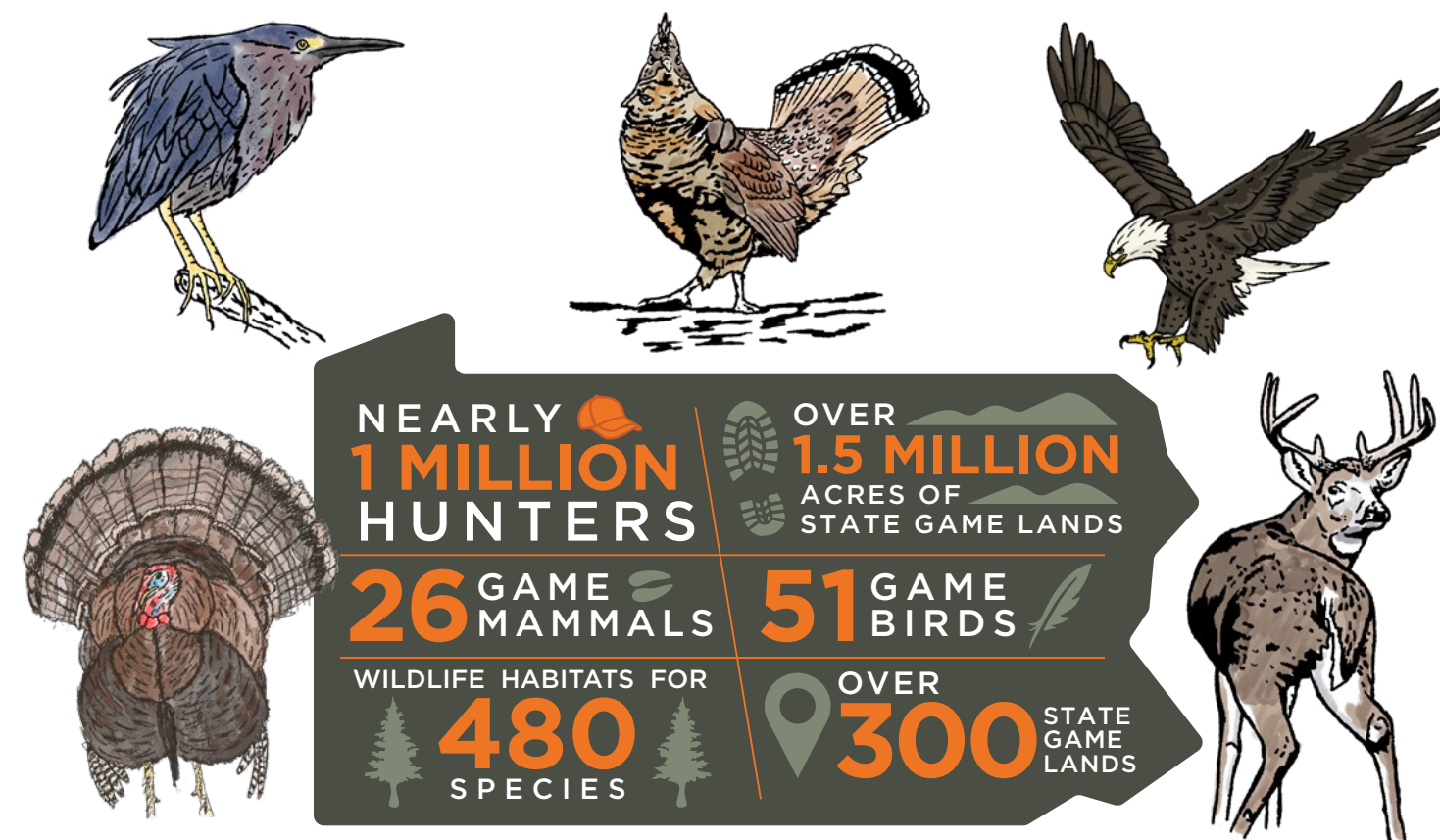
PAGE
31 **GOAL 5**
RECRUIT, DEVELOP, RETAIN, AND SUPPORT AGENCY STAFF

PAGE
35 **CONCLUSION**



OUR MISSION

Manage and protect wildlife and their habitats while promoting hunting and trapping for current and future generations.



PENNSYLVANIA HUNTERS, TRAPPERS, AND WILDLIFE ENTHUSIASTS:



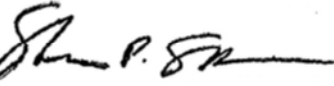
It is my honor to present the 2023-24 Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. I am deeply grateful and humbled to lead an organization with such a distinguished legacy and critical mission. Our responsibility to safeguard Pennsylvania’s wildlife is an undertaking we pursue with passion, determination, and a shared vision for the future.

This year was marked by collaboration and progress as we worked to manage and protect Pennsylvania’s wildlife and their habitats while promoting our traditions of sustainable hunting, trapping, and outdoor recreation. Within this report, you will find highlights of a few of our achievements, including the state’s largest-ever wild turkey study, intensive improvements to 30,000 acres of forested habitat, and the launch of a new program to reinvest in the shooting sports. These accomplishments are the direct result of the dedication and professionalism of our staff, the leadership of our Board of Commissioners, and the support and collaboration of our many stakeholders.

Looking ahead, we are committed to building upon these successes, to ensure the Pennsylvania Game Commission remains at the forefront of wildlife conservation. Together, we will create a future where wildlife populations thrive, our proud hunting and trapping heritage continues, and the natural world remains a source of inspiration and connection for all Pennsylvanians.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.

Sincerely,



Stephen P. Smith
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Game Commission



OUR LOGO

The Pennsylvania Game Commission unveiled a new logo, designed by Bob Sopchick, in 2001 to help citizens better understand the agency’s mission. Incorporating iconic elements of the Keystone State, the logo signifies the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s role as steward of wildlife resources.



WHITE-TAILED DEER

Pennsylvania’s state mammal epitomizes endurance and has played a key role throughout the Commonwealth’s history.



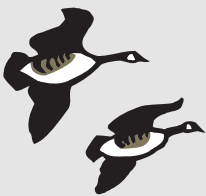
BALD EAGLE

The restoration of our nation’s symbol illustrates successful conservation in the Commonwealth.



RUFFED GROUSE

Dubbed the king of gamebirds, Pennsylvania’s state bird showcases the beauty of wildlife in the Commonwealth.



CANADA GEESE

Another restored game species represents the critical role of wetland habitat to environmental health and wildlife.



MOUNTAIN LAUREL

Pennsylvania’s state flower spotlights the striking blooms that color the Commonwealth each spring.



BEAVER LODGE

The beaver’s comeback after extirpation highlights the importance of furbearers in the state.



MOUNTAIN RANGE

The most illustrious feature of Penn’s Woods underscores the Commonwealth’s varied terrain.



EASTERN HEMLOCK

Exhibiting ecological endurance, the state tree contributed significantly to Pennsylvania’s historical development.



KEYSTONE

The symbol of connection, unification, and communication signifies Pennsylvania’s vital role in holding together the states of newly formed America as the center state of 13 colonies.



GOAL 1

PROACTIVELY MANAGE WILDLIFE

WHITE-TAILED DEER

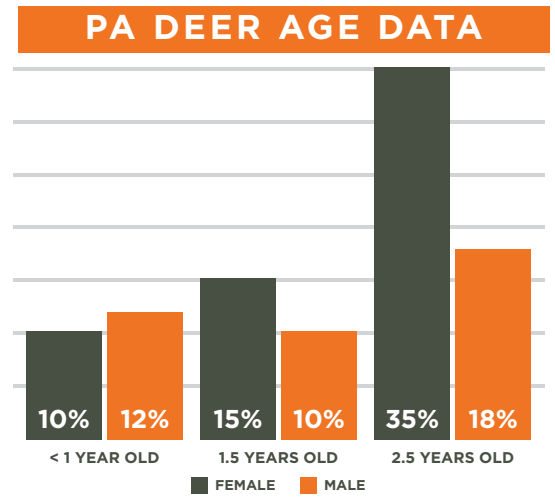
Pennsylvania ranked third in the country for deer harvest and harvest density.



2023 DEER AGING

75+ TRAINED DEER AGERS
400 DEER PROCESSORS VISITED
DATA COLLECTED FROM 24,000 DEER

Thanks to antler-point restrictions, antlered deer aged **2.5 years or older** accounted for **64% of the buck harvest.**



ADDRESSING CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE



To slow the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), the Game Commission worked to increase antlerless harvest while providing more hunter opportunity. An extended firearms season was added for January 2025, in three Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) where CWD has been found: 4A, 4D, and 5A.

In addition to extended seasons, the Game Commission is conducting a multi-year research project to better understand the effects of CWD on white-tailed deer behavior and mortality.

Research is focused on Bedford and Fulton counties, where nearly 1 in 2 hunter-harvested adult deer tests positive.

Deer used for this study will be equipped with a GPS collar and ear tags, allowing biologists to compare movements and survival between infected and uninfected animals.

**25** LANDOWNERS PARTICIPATED

**100** DEER CAPTURED

**87** COLLARS DEPLOYED



ELK

From January to March 2024, the Game Commission captured yearling elk (1 year old) and fitted them with radio collars to track and determine their survival rate. The study will be repeated next year to increase overall sample size.

39 YEARLINGS FITTED WITH COLLARS

YEARLINGS MONITORED FOR **1 YEAR**

91% YEARLING SURVIVAL RATE

The Game Commission locates and counts elk using a thermal image camera mounted underneath a fixed-wing plane. Collared elk help calculate detection rates, allowing the agency to estimate population.

ELK HUNTING

2023 TOTAL APPLICATIONS: **111,597**

YEAR	APPLICATIONS	ARCHERY	GENERAL	LATE	APPLICANTS
2019	64,143	16,622	37,734	9,787	41,240
2020	79,413	22,537	43,413	13,463	47,689
2021	99,390	24,637	48,991	25,762	53,751
2022	104,248	27,733	49,817	26,698	56,640
2023	111,597	30,546	51,829	29,222	57,154

2023 SEASON:

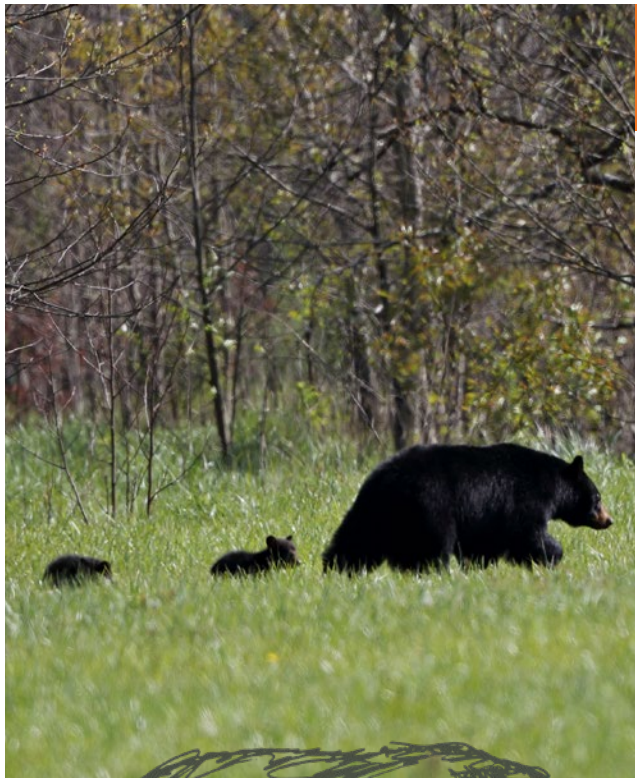
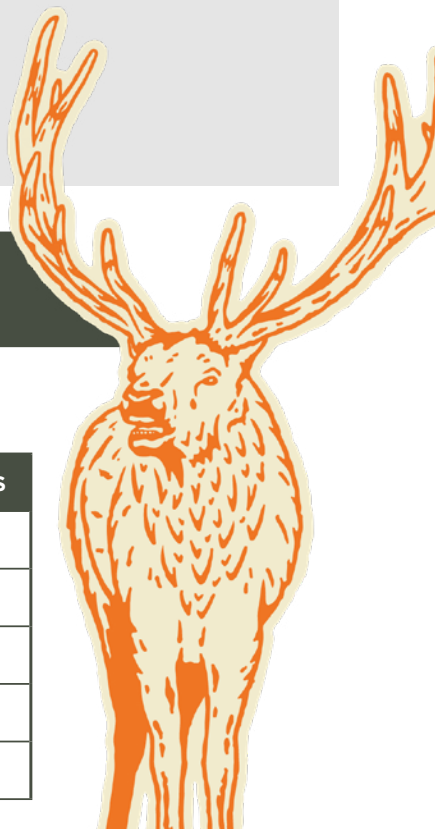
144 LICENSES
65 ANTLERED AND
79 ANTLERLESS



TOTAL HARVEST: **118**

ANTLERED HARVEST: **59 OUT OF 65**

ANTLERLESS HARVEST: **59 OUT OF 79**



BLACK BEAR

The Game Commission began building a new black bear population model in 2021, using harvest rates, recruitment, abundance, and natural survival rates. This will provide insight into the sustainability of black bear management practices and what changes can be made without causing negative effects on the bear population.

To determine the genetic structure of the bear population, a research project using samples from harvested bears kicked off in 2022. Examining how bears move across the state will help the agency develop the new population model.

HUNTERS HARVESTED 2,920 BEARS DURING THE 2023 SEASON.

6
IN EARLY SEASON

696
IN ARCHERY SEASON

541
IN MUZZLELOADER AND SPECIAL FIREARMS SEASONS

1,086
IN GENERAL SEASON

591
IN EXTENDED SEASON

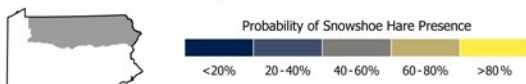
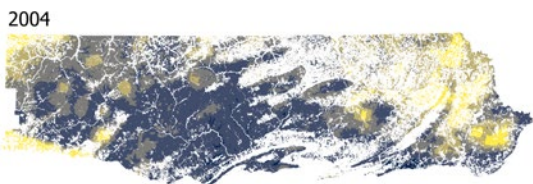


SNOWSHOE HARE

A recent study found that areas of Pennsylvania likely to have snowshoe hares declined by 70% since 2004.

Improving habitat conditions at a large enough scale can reduce or eliminate the disadvantage of mismatch, based on research in other states.

In Pennsylvania, prescribed fire is used to manage scrub oak barrens, creating preferred snowshoe hare habitat and increasing annual survival.



A situation called "mismatch," when a white snowshoe hare exists on a brown background, has been shown to increase vulnerability to predation.



WILD TURKEY

LARGEST-EVER WILD TURKEY STUDY

Each year through 2025, hens across four Pennsylvania WMUs representing different habitat types will be trapped and released on site with radio transmitters to provide data on survival, reproduction, movement, and habitat use.



AS OF AUGUST 2024

405 HENS EQUIPPED WITH RADIO TRANSMITTERS

2.8 MILLION GPS LOCATIONS COLLECTED

58 MILLION ACCELEROMETER RECORDS REPORTED

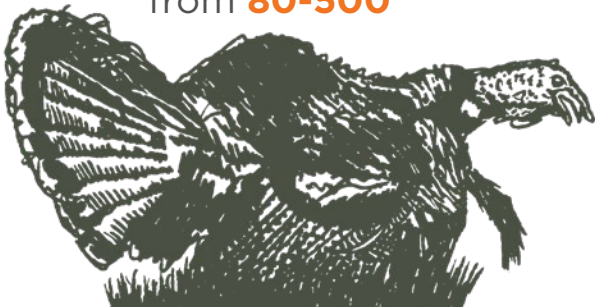
2023 FALL HARVEST:

66,500 hunters

4,600 turkeys harvested

7% of hunters harvested a turkey

Harvest ranged by WMU from **80-500**



2024 SPRING HARVEST:

170,300 spring turkey hunters, including **14,300 junior hunters**

39,500 turkeys harvested

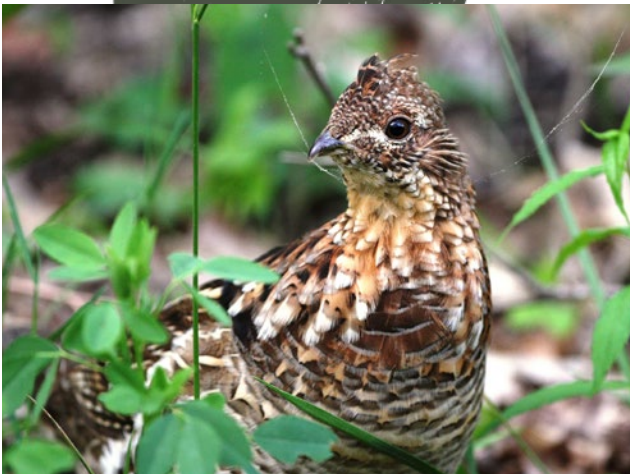
3,100 turkeys harvested during the junior season

5,200 turkeys harvested with a special license

Approximately **20% of hunters** harvested 1 bird

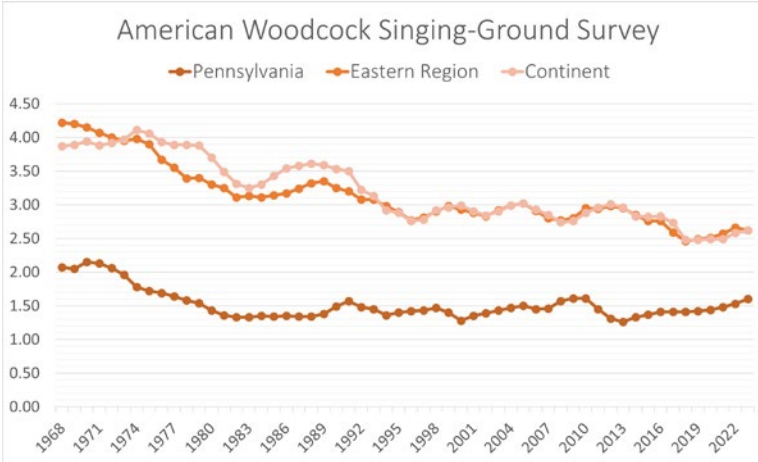
RUFFED GROUSE

The flush rate (number of ruffed grouse observed per hour hunted) was the highest since the 2013-14 season, indicating recovery after West Nile virus caused a population decline in 2017-18.



AMERICAN WOODCOCK

Despite long-term declines across the continent, the American Woodcock Singing-Ground-Survey indicates Pennsylvania's woodcock population has been increasing over the past decade.

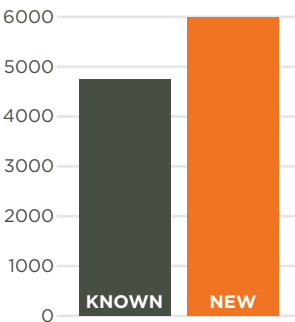


LITTLE BROWN BAT

Since white-nose syndrome (WNS) hit the United States, only about 100 colonies of little brown bats remain in Pennsylvania. The species is now being considered for endangered status.

The Game Commission started an intensive search using radio telemetry to track adult female little brown bats, historically the most abundant bat in the East. The search led to new roost sites, giving hope the species may be in better shape than initially feared.

TRACKING EFFORTS LED PGC TO 18 NEW MATERNITY COLONIES WITH OVER 1,200 ADULT FEMALES

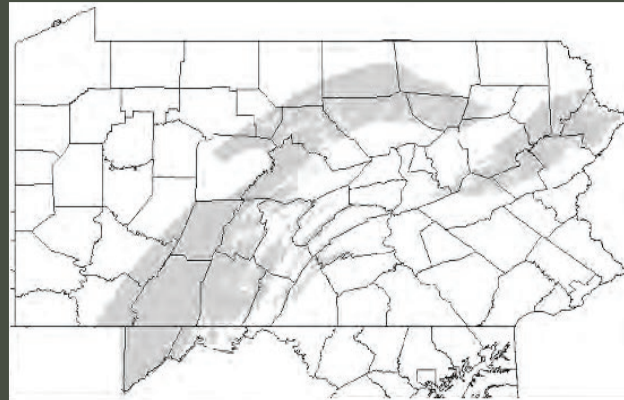


GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER

Biologists completed over 70 springtime population surveys as part of a regional, state, and national effort to monitor golden-winged warbler populations for assessing potential endangered species status. In addition to population surveys, agency foresters create young forest habitat to support golden winged warbler populations.



PENNSYLVANIA IS HOME TO **35% OF THE APPALACHIAN REGION'S** GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER POPULATION.



Focal (shaded) areas of golden-winged warbler habitat management in Pennsylvania and western Maryland.

PIPING PLOVER

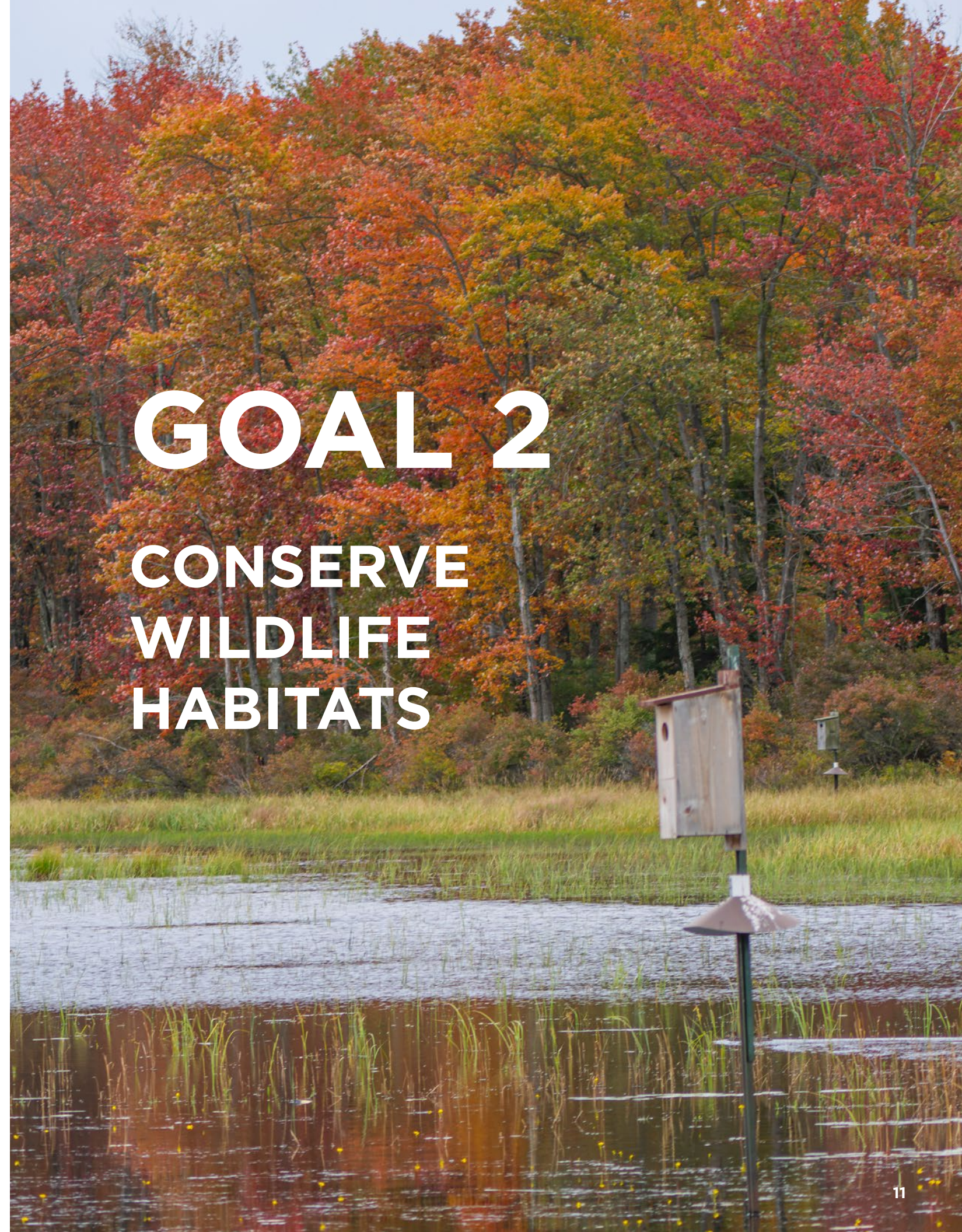
Pennsylvania's most endangered shorebird returned to Presque Isle State Park for the 7th consecutive breeding season.

2023 PIPING PLOVER SEASON HIGHLIGHTS:

- 4 unique piping plover breeding pairs — a record since their return in 2017 — representing 5% of the global Great Lakes piping plover population
- 2 pairs included males that hatched in Pennsylvania in 2021 and 2022
- 4 nests
- 2 chicks fledged in Pennsylvania
- 8 chicks fledged from a piping plover salvage rearing facility in Michigan



GOAL 2 CONSERVE WILDLIFE HABITATS



STATE LANDS BAT HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

The Game Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) continued work on the 30-year Habitat Conservation Plan, which allows the agencies to proactively plan for the conservation of Indiana and northern long-eared bats across a combined 3.8 million acres of state lands. A new plan will include the addition of little brown and tri-colored bats.



STATE GAME LANDS MANAGEMENT

Efficient and sustainable habitat practices for each state game lands are guided by comprehensive management plans (CMPs). These plans are updated every 10 years, with reviews at the halfway point.

- **24 APPROVED CMPS**
- **5 APPROVED REVIEWS**

A new CMP status update app and CMP status dashboard developed by the GIS Division are advancing efficiency by allowing staff to track the approval process and stay on task.



OPEN HABITATS



The state game lands system has over 100,000 acres of open habitat for wildlife, which is critical to over 65% of Pennsylvania's threatened and endangered species.

- **More than 56,000 acres** of actively managed herbaceous openings
- **More than 20,000 acres** of shrublands and barrens
- **More than 23,000 acres** of wetland habitats

Over 18,000 herbaceous openings are managed or improved by planting and maintaining native grasslands and wildflower fields, providing pheasant hunting opportunities in the fall. The Game Commission uses prescribed fire and mowing outside of critical nesting periods.

The agency maintains over 2,700 acres of sharecropping lease agreements with local farmers, with over 75% occurring on 5 game lands. These lands provide waterfowl habitat and increased hunting opportunity.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT ON PRIVATE LANDS

The Game Commission, in collaboration with Pheasants Forever and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, implemented farm bill programs to improve wildlife habitat and sustain agricultural production across the state's private lands.

- **10 FARM BILL BIOLOGISTS** worked in 31 counties
- **6,000 PEOPLE** reached through outreach
- **989 LANDOWNERS** contacted
- **446 LANDOWNERS** visited
- **404 CONSERVATION PLANS** developed or modified
- **4,971 ACRES** directly impacted



The Game Commission's private lands forester assisted the Natural Resources Conservation Service in implementing farm bill forestry projects to promote healthy forests and benefit wildlife.

- **31 site visits across 22 counties**
- **14 forestry plans reviewed or completed on 783 acres**
- **1,836 acres of work completed**





PRESCRIBED FIRE

51 BURN DAYS ACROSS 322 UNITS

11,683 ACRES

- **43%** forest
- **37%** grassland
- **20%** mix of grassland and forest



To help the Game Commission maintain prescribed fire efficiency, 16 employees achieved qualification advancements with a total of 282 personnel holding a qualification to participate in the prescribed fire program.

The agency also worked with the DCNR to contain multiple wildfires.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

The Game Commission invested in a variety of infrastructure updates to strengthen agency capabilities and broaden access to state game lands.

2 HABITAT CREW HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS BUILT

2 HABITAT MAINTENANCE CREW STORAGE BUILDINGS BUILT

6 ROOFS REPLACED

TRAINING WING ADDED TO HEADQUARTERS

79 MILES OF ACCESS ROADWAYS ON 37 STATE GAME LANDS CREATED OR MAINTAINED

21 BRIDGES BUILT TO IMPROVE AQUATIC ORGANISM PASSAGE



Construction of office and conference room space at the Game Commission headquarters building is currently underway.

RIGHT-OF-WAY PROGRAM

13 LICENSES/PERMITS ISSUED

12 LICENSES/PERMITS TERMINATED OR AMENDED

1,356 TOTAL ACTIVE LICENSES

\$5,817,124 GENERATED IN REVENUE FOR WILDLIFE



FORESTRY FOR WILDLIFE

Nearly 30,000 acres of forested habitat were improved to provide food and cover for wildlife.

8,062 ACRES TREATED WITH SELECTIVE HERBICIDE

16,818 ACRES ACRES OF NON-TIMBER SALE FOREST HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS

4,728 ACRES OF TIMBER SALE HARVEST



123,000 ACRES SPRAYED IN MAY ACROSS 5 REGIONS TO TREAT SPONGY MOTHS



1 MILLION SEEDLINGS DISTRIBUTED TO REGIONS, PARTNERS, AND PUBLIC BY HOWARD NURSERY



1,582 ACRES OF DEER FENCE INSTALLED



411 ACRES OF DEER FENCE REMOVED

PAYMENT-IN-LIEU-OF-TAX PROGRAM

The Game Commission paid \$1,822,285.69 in lieu of taxes, in equal amounts, to the counties, townships, and school districts where state game lands are located. The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board paid an additional \$9,111,428.45 for a total of \$10,933,714.14 paid to local governments.



OIL, GAS, AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

- 168 agreements encompassing 246,117 acres on state game lands
- \$88,426,062.17 deposited into the Game Fund
- Additional \$9,404,340 deposited into the restricted account for the purchase of wildlife habitats, lands, or other uses incidental to hunting, furtaking, and wildlife resource management.

Fluctuating market prices for natural gas and oil returned to more typical levels, resulting in decreased revenue from the previous year.



LAND SURVEYING AND MAPPING

NEARLY 200 MILES OF STATE GAME LANDS BOUNDARY AND 1,200 PROPERTY CORNERS CREATED OR RECOVERED.



GOAL 3

SUPPORT PENNSYLVANIA'S HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND CONSERVATION HERITAGE



HUNTER-TRAPPER EDUCATION PROGRAMS



HUNTER-TRAPPER EDUCATION COURSE

CERTIFIED STUDENTS: 20,557

- In-person: 14,444
- Online: 6,113

*Capitalizing on Act 27 of 2000, 51 Hunter-Trapper Education Courses were taught in public schools across the state.

SUCCESSFUL BOWHUNTING

CERTIFIED STUDENTS: 381

- In-person: 61
- Online: 320

ARCHERY SAFETY

CERTIFIED STUDENTS: 159 (Online Only)

SUCCESSFUL FURTAKING

CERTIFIED STUDENTS: 24 (In-person Only)

CABLE RESTRAINT

CERTIFIED STUDENTS: 354

- In-person: 102
- Online: 252



HUNTING-RELATED SHOOTING INCIDENTS (2023)

13
TOTAL

12
NONFATAL

1
FATAL

*LOWEST NUMBER REPORTED IN PENNSYLVANIA SINCE 1915



MENTORED HUNTS

The Game Commission partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Deer Association, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to host mentored hunts at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge and Benjamin Rush State Park.

To help develop lifelong hunters, the agency also provided second step hunt opportunities for former mentees to expand their knowledge and skills, including



how to scout for deer, hunt from a tree stand, and quarter a deer. Veteran mentees also had the opportunity to learn how to mentor other new hunters.



6
MULTI-DAY MENTORED DEER ARCHERY HUNTS FOR MORE THAN 60 NEW HUNTERS



2
SECOND STEP MENTORED HUNTS WITH 14 PARTICIPANTS



5
NEW MENTORS CREATED

LEARN TO HUNT PROGRAM

196 people registered for the live event, and 2,700 people viewed the recorded three-part waterfowl series on YouTube



LAND ACQUISITIONS

The Game Commission continues to increase access and opportunity by enhancing the state game lands system via land acquisitions.

10,963 ACRES ADDED THROUGH 38 TOTAL CONTRACTS, INCLUDING 7 DONATIONS, 12 INDENTURES, AND 1 INTERIOR PARCEL

6 ACQUISITIONS COMPLETED THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH LAND CONSERVANCIES



PHEASANT PROPAGATION PROGRAM

224,736

TOTAL PHEASANTS STOCKED ON 233 PROPERTIES IN 62 COUNTIES



47,430

RELEASED FOR WINTER SEASON



215,857

HUNTER DAYS SPENT PURSUING PHEASANTS (GAME TAKE SURVEY)

56,781

ADULT PERMITS

18,322

YOUTH PERMITS



348

YOUTH REGISTERED FOR 18 JUNIOR PHEASANT HUNTS



WILDLIFE VIEWING

Nearly 1.5 million people tuned in to 4 different livestreamed wildlife cams to see elk, snow geese, bald eagles, and more in their natural habitats through HDOnTap.

Construction for a viewing deck at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area began in November 2024.

ENVIROTHON

The Game Commission designed wildlife station tests and provided resources for the 40th Pennsylvania Envirothon.

- 5-MEMBER TEAMS FROM 63 PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES
- 315 TOTAL STUDENTS
- NORTH EAST HIGH SCHOOL, ERIE COUNTY WON THE STATE EVENT AND PLACED 8TH OVERALL AT THE NATIONAL COMPETITION



PENNSYLVANIA ELK CAM

STREAMING LIVE FROM ELK COUNTY





SHOOTING RANGES

Under the Pittman-Robertson Act, federal excise tax dollars generated from the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment directly support the Game Commission’s mission. The agency continues to invest in shooting ranges to facilitate the millions of recreational shooters in the Keystone State and ensure the future of wildlife conservation.

Recreation opportunity at **66 PUBLIC SHOOTING RANGES** on 40 separate state game lands

5 NEW ARCHERY RANGES AND 3 NEW SHOTGUN RANGES completed in the fiscal year



SHOOTING RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Game Commission developed the Shooting Range Improvement Program to increase opportunity and access at sportsmen’s clubs throughout Pennsylvania. Currently in its pilot year, the program will award grants to update aging infrastructure, construct new facilities, and enhance safety.

A MAXIMUM OF \$30,000 WILL BE AWARDED TO 6-12 APPLICANTS

UP TO 2 PROJECTS MAY BE SELECTED PER REGION

NATIONAL ARCHERY IN THE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

- 315 PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS offered the archery curriculum
- More than 115,000 STUDENTS participated
- Record-setting \$22,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS awarded

PENNSYLVANIA NASP ARCHERS CROWNED NATIONAL CHAMPIONS FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR



HUNTER ACCESS PROGRAM

The nation’s oldest and one of the largest, the Game Commission’s Hunter Access Program provides public access to private land while helping landowners manage game populations on their properties.

MORE THAN 10,000 PARCELS ENROLLED

ENCOMPASSING 1.68 MILLION ACRES

479 BLUEBIRD NEST BOX KITS AND 125,675 TREE AND SHRUB SEEDLINGS PROVIDED TO COOPERATING LANDOWNERS TO IMPROVE WILDLIFE HABITAT

The Game Commission is in the process of improving the program for both hunters and landowners with a modern mapping and reservation system to provide more detailed information on property boundaries and access availability.

GOAL 4

EXPAND AGENCY RELEVANCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

2023-24

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

141

FULL-TIME FIELD
GAME WARDENS

165

DEPUTY STATE
GAME WARDENS

46,000

SQUARE MILES
PATROLLED



CITATIONS, WARNINGS, AND PROSECUTIONS

TOP 10 VIOLATIONS

UNLAWFUL TAKING OF GAME OR WILDLIFE	1,184
HUNT OR TAKE GAME OR WILDLIFE WITH BAIT OR ENTICEMENT	341
LICENSE VIOLATION	336
RANGE VIOLATION	278
POSSESS A LOADED FIREARM IN A VEHICLE (IN MOTION OR STATIONARY)	272
OPERATE A MOTORIZED VEHICLE ON SGL OR CO-OP PROPERTY	251
TAGGING VIOLATION	220
USING A VEHICLE TO HUNT GAME	202
CWD VIOLATION	161
SAFETY ZONE VIOLATION	156

WARNINGS
5,435

DISMISSED AND
WITHDRAWN
789

UNSUCCESSFUL
180

SUCCESSFUL
4,415

PROSECUTION
RATE
96.7%

OPERATION GAME THIEF

The Operation Game Thief program serves to protect wild birds and wild mammals and encourages those who have information related to wildlife crimes to report details as soon as possible.

- Toll-free hotline available 24/7/365
- 1,199 submissions for 2023-24
- 5-minute average turnaround time from OGT submission to officer being dispatched





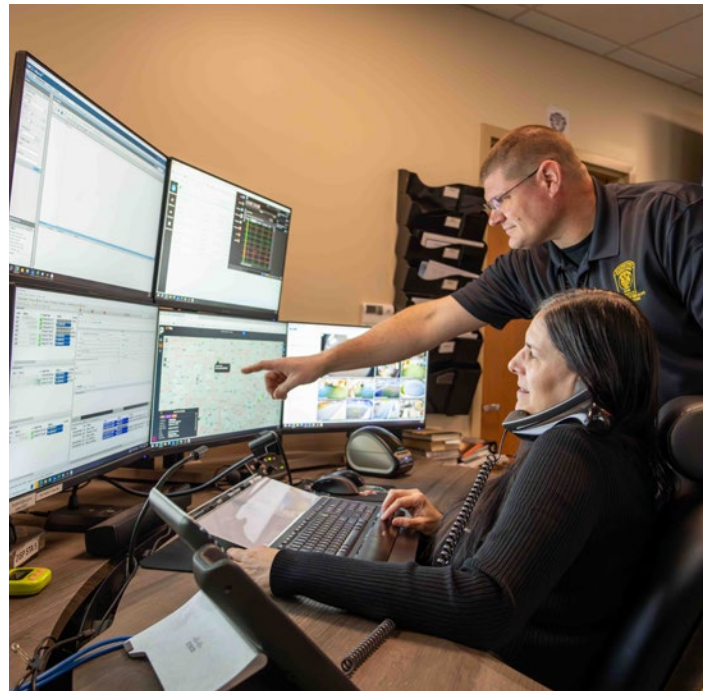
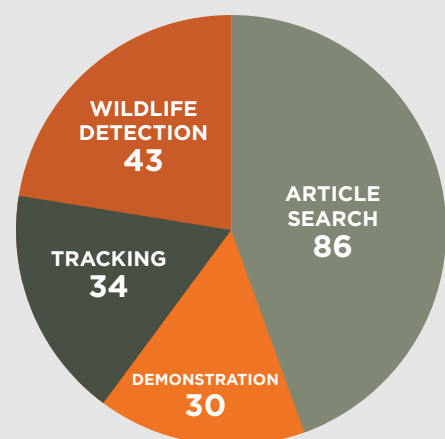
K-9 Ayla, supervised by K-9 Special Investigator SSgt. Shawn Barron, alerts on a .17 Remington rifle shell discarded after a road hunting incident in the Southwest Region

K-9 UNIT

The Special Operations Division maintains a K-9 team in each region to help find small pieces of evidence and solve complex cases. The K-9s, which are all Labrador retrievers, are trained in several disciplines and can detect Pennsylvania's four big game species.

- **6 K-9 teams** throughout the state
- **193 deployments** in 2023-24

K-9 DEPLOYMENTS



CENTRALIZED DISPATCH CENTER

Located at Game Commission headquarters in Harrisburg, the Centralized Dispatch Center is available 24/7/365, providing operational coverage and support to game wardens, field staff, and the public.



205,816
TOTAL CALLS
RECEIVED



89,920
INCIDENTS
CREATED



99.69%
ANSWER
RATE



3:36
AVERAGE CALL
HANDLE TIME

SHOP WITH A COP

Pennsylvania state game wardens participated in the Shop with a Cop program, which partners children with local law enforcement to purchase Christmas gifts.



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

In August 2023, Pennsylvania state game wardens participated in 41 National Night Out events, bringing law enforcement and communities together to make neighborhoods safer.



CAMO AT THE CAPITOL

The Game Commission celebrated Pennsylvania's unique hunting heritage at its Camo at the Capitol event in Harrisburg in October 2023.

The agency shared its mission and work supporting wildlife conservation with state legislators, staffers, and Capitol visitors.

Legislators also had the opportunity to record public service announcement videos, detailing the importance of hunting and hunters to the Commonwealth, to share with their constituents.



STATE GAME LANDS DRIVING TOURS

STATE GAME LANDS DRIVING TOURS

In October 2023, the Game Commission hosted 8 free driving tours through state game lands across the Commonwealth to showcase the agency's habitat work and opportunities available to the public.



HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

The Game Commission is a proud partner of Hunters Sharing the Harvest, Pennsylvania's premier venison donation program.

Thanks to a network of 110 participating processors in 56 of 67 counties, Hunters Sharing the Harvest has distributed more than 2.8 million pounds of venison to hungry Pennsylvanians since 1991.

PENNSYLVANIA LED THE NATION IN VENISON DONATIONS FOR THE 2023-24 SEASON:

RECORD-BREAKING
261,672 LBS
RECEIVED

1.3 MILLION
SERVINGS OF LEAN, HIGH-PROTEIN
VENISON PROVIDED

DONATED:
6,905 **DEER** **6** **ELK**



JUNIOR GAME WARDEN CAMPS

The Game Commission hosted junior game warden camps in each region during the summer of 2024, giving campers an inside look at what it takes to be a state game warden.

- 6 JUNIOR GAME WARDEN CAMPS
- 200 CAMPERS AGES 12-15



PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

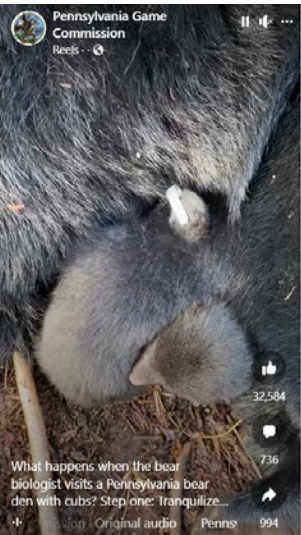
In addition to 29,120 paid subscribers, complimentary subscriptions of the Game Commission's monthly magazine are distributed to Hunter Access cooperators, libraries, deer processors, and Hunter-Trapper Education instructors and graduates.

83,000
TOTAL CIRCULATION

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Game Commission continued to expand its social media presence, with a significant year-over-year increase in engagement.

FACEBOOK REACH OF 7.2 MILLION **UP 69%**



TOP POST

Reach:
1,243,785
Reactions, comments, and shares:
34,314

FOLLOWERS AS OF DECEMBER 2024

Facebook

- Pennsylvania Game Commission: **287K**
- Operation Game Thief: **14.9K**
- Pennsylvania NASP: **3.3K**
- Northwest Region: **3.6K**
- Southwest Region: **2.9K**
- Northcentral Region: **3K**
- Southcentral Region: **4.5K**
- Northeast Region: **2.8K**
- Southeast Region: **5.1K**
- Middle Creek WMA: **3.7K**



Instagram: **44.9K**
YouTube: **40.7K**
X: **17.6K**
LinkedIn: **4.3K**

CALL OF THE OUTDOORS

The agency relaunched its podcast, Call of the Outdoors, in September 2023, with an updated logo, set, and added video component.

- 13 NEW EPISODES
- MORE THAN 25,000 VIEWS AND LISTENS



6 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR WILDLIFE

The Game Commission launched its 6 Things You Can Do For Wildlife campaign in May 2023, targeting urban audiences with tips for living responsibly with wild birds and mammals.

3.9 MILLION IMPRESSIONS
IN 1-MONTH CAMPAIGN

GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOOR SHOW

Throughout the 9-day Great American Outdoor Show in February, the Game Commission hosted a game warden recruitment event, held Hunter-Trapper Education courses, introduced families to the National Archery in the Schools Program, and interacted with tens of thousands of outdoor enthusiasts.



GOAL 5

**RECRUIT,
DEVELOP,
RETAIN, AND
SUPPORT
AGENCY STAFF**

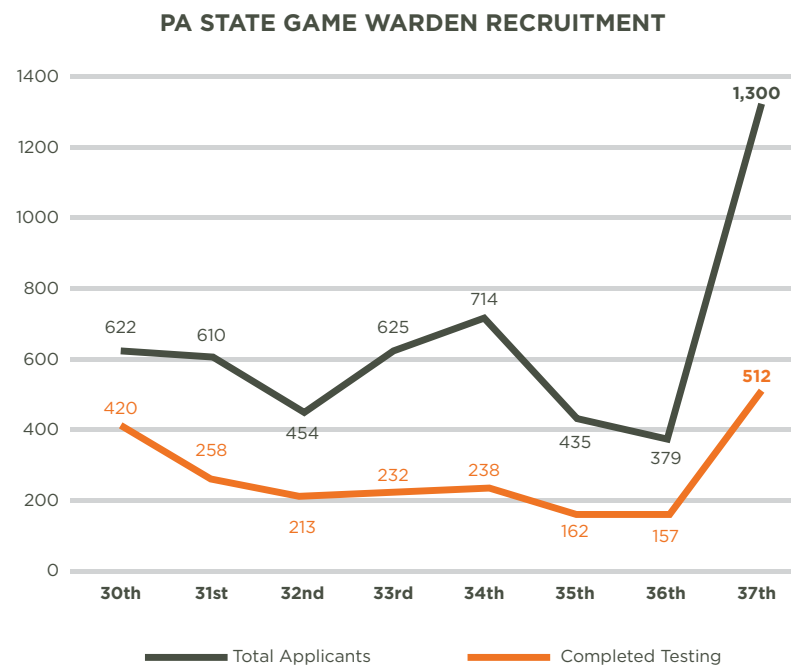




STATE GAME WARDEN CADET RECRUITMENT

The Game Commission revamped its process for recruiting state game warden cadets, resulting in 142% more applicants and 113% more candidates completing testing.

- Updated eligibility requirements to unlock new talent
- Developed a strategic recruitment plan that included targeted advertising and dedicated recruitment events
- Engaged with candidates to decrease fallout, prepare them for the application process, and increase pass rates for testing
- Hosted regional cadet field days for candidates to prepare for physical fitness testing



ROSS LEFFLER SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION

Following 44 weeks of intensive training, including 10 weeks in the field, the Game Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation (RLSC) graduated its 35th class in February.

12 OFFICERS ADDED TO THE RANKS

782 TOTAL RLSC GRADUATES

The 36th class of game warden cadets began training in March and is scheduled to graduate in February 2025.

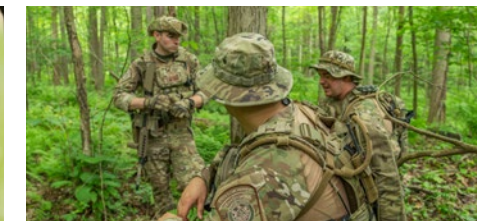
Currently, 164 deputy game wardens, who have completed a basic training course at RLSC, serve as an extension of state game wardens.



A CAREER OF COURAGE

The role of state game wardens is unique among law enforcement. They often work alone in remote areas, encounter armed individuals, approach agitated wildlife, and conduct rescue operations in challenging conditions. In addition to regular responsibilities, Pennsylvania state game wardens also aid other agencies in dangerous operations.

The Game Commission's Tracking Team, multiple agency K-9s, and Southeast Region wardens assisted in the 14-day manhunt for escaped prisoner Danilo Cavalcante. Cavalcante was convicted of several murders and awaiting transfer to another detention center when he escaped from Chester County Prison on August 31, 2023. While on the run, Cavalcante's trail spanned a wide area, including state game lands, which prompted the agency to close a rifle range and advised hunters to be on the lookout while federal, state, and local law enforcement were deployed.



INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Game Commission hired dozens of paid interns across all 6 of its regions, exposing students to the agency's conservation work. Interns gained experience in wildlife research, habitat management, educational outreach, and more.



STAFF RECOGNITION



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION CONVENTION
Wildlife Officer of the Year:
Cody Jones, Northwest Region
Joe Kurz Wildlife Manager of the Year:
Travis Anderson, Southwest Region (Pictured)

The Game Commission’s film **“Pennsylvania: A Keystone for Wildlife”** received an award for **Outstanding Excellence at the Nature Without Borders International Film Festival**. Created by Videographer Tracy Graziano, the film highlights several wildlife species, their habitats, and the history of conservation in Pennsylvania.



The Game Commission’s **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Services Division** received a **Special Achievement in GIS Award** at the Esri User Conference for the team’s innovations in mapping, analytics software, and leadership in the field.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission presented **Game Commission staff** with an award for **developing a joint system for writing citations, e-filing them with the courts, and giving written warnings**. The Game Commission also launched a mobile app for officers to access an individual’s licenses and privileges by scanning their driver’s license in the field. The new system saves officers time, increases their safety in the field, and provides them with more detailed reporting.



The Game Commission presented **Dr. Gary Alt** with the **John C. Oliver Wildlife Conservation Lifetime Achievement Award** for the lasting impact of his 27-year tenure with the agency.

CONCLUSION: PENNSYLVANIA BOARD OF GAME COMMISSIONERS

DISTRICT 3: Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties

Commissioner Foradora grew up in Brockway in Jefferson County, where the hunting tradition runs deep in his family. He’s been hunting since he was 12, more than 40 years. He enjoys hunting all game and trapping in Pennsylvania, but, like many hunters, deer are his favorite, followed by turkeys. When he’s not hunting, fishing, or trapping, Foradora can be found in his insurance business office in DuBois, where he puts his accounting and economics degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania to use.



SCOTT H. FORADORA
PRESIDENT

DISTRICT 2: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties

Only the sixth commissioner to serve a second term, Commissioner Fredericks previously served from 1991-99 and acted as chairman of the Wildlife Management Bureau committee for six of those years. Fredericks has lived his entire life in Washington County. He’s a lifelong hunter and trapper and has hunted all big and small game but now really enjoys hunting for ruffed grouse. Fredericks graduated from Penn State Mont Alto campus in 1972 with a degree in forest technology. In 1992, he attended Colorado State University for a structured course in wildlife management designed for individuals who have been politically appointed to a position to affect management policy for wildlife resources. Now retired, Fredericks had a 42-year career as an environmental engineer and manager of conservation properties and activities for CONSOL Energy, where he was responsible for coordinating natural-resource management on 500,000 acres in several states.



DENNIS R. FREDERICKS
VICE PRESIDENT

DISTRICT 5: Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Sullivan, Tioga, and Union counties

Originally from Elmsport, Commissioner DiMarco grew up on a dairy farm and has been a hunter since 1959. He’s a member of the Grays Run Hunting and Fishing Club, has mentored three sons in the hunting and trapping traditions, and has been a Hunter Access Program cooperator since 1974. DiMarco graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business education from Shippensburg College in 1969 and went on to earn a master’s degree in student personnel management in 1972 from Pennsylvania State University. DiMarco began his career in 1969 as a teacher in the Loyalsock Township School District. He became assistant high school principal in 1989 then principal in 1994, before retiring in 2009 with 40 years in public education. DiMarco also purchased his home farm in 1974 and gradually rented and leased additional acres, raising corn, soybeans, squash, and alfalfa as well as 75 head of Angus steers annually. He currently owns and operates 330 acres.



ALLEN DIMARCO
SECRETARY

PENNSYLVANIA BOARD OF GAME COMMISSIONERS



**KRISTEN
KOPPENHAFER**

DISTRICT 1:

**Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence,
Mercer, Venango, and Warren counties**

Commissioner Koppenhafer of Warren, Pennsylvania is a dedicated mother, hunter, conservationist, and small business owner. A lifelong resident of Pennsylvania, she has served on the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners since her confirmation in November 2019, nominated by Governor Tom Wolf. With extensive experience as a wildlife biologist for various conservation-based NGOs, including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Koppenhafer has managed significant funding resulting in thousands of acres impacted on the Allegheny National Forest. Passionate about preserving outdoor traditions, she actively engages her family (husband and two children) in hunting and supports hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation programs.



**HALEY
SANKEY**

DISTRICT 4:

Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset counties

Commissioner Sankey grew up in Clearfield County, and she spends the bulk of her free time outdoors. She enjoys hunting, hiking, fishing, boating, skiing, and biking. Sankey learned about managing soil and water resources, fish migrations, and wildlife tagging and tracking in high school environmental science and biology classes, which further piqued her interest in conservation. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in environmental practice and policy from Juniata College in 1999. She then earned a master's degree in project management from Pennsylvania State University. Since 2011, Sankey has been teaching in the Energy and Sustainability Policy Program at Penn State's University Park campus.



**MICHAEL
MITRICK**

DISTRICT 6:

**Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Juniata, Lancaster,
Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, and York counties**

Commissioner Mitrick grew up in Illinois, where his father introduced him to rabbit and pheasant hunting. He continued to hunt pheasants throughout his college years. When he moved to Pennsylvania in 1981, deer hunting quickly became his new passion. He has held a Pennsylvania hunting license every year since moving to the state. Mitrick is a member of several sportsmen's organizations, including Starview Sportsmen's Association, York Riflemen, and S&M Hunting Lodge. When he's not enjoying the outdoors, Mitrick can be found working as an orthopedic surgeon at OSS Health in York. In addition to hunting in Penn's Woods, Mitrick has hunted and participated in outdoor recreational activities in several other states and countries.

DISTRICT 7:

Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties

Commissioner Knick has been an avid hunter and angler for 54 years and enjoys hunting on state game lands in northeastern Pennsylvania. He has also hunted in New York, Wyoming, and Alabama. Knick was raised on a dairy farm and believes the lessons learned there helped him better understand animal management and habitat. Knick retired from Knick Fence Company in Dupont and also worked for Northeast Arborists of Pittson and Mark's Landscaping of Dupont. As a commissioner, Knick wants to focus on Pennsylvania's youth.



**STANLEY
KNICK JR.**

DISTRICT 8:

Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties

Commissioner Pride, of Cochranville, Chester County, is the first African American appointed to the board and founder of Legacy Land & Water Partners. He's also lead coach with the Mid-Atlantic Youth Anglers and Outdoor Partners, which strives to grow diverse participation in outdoors and conservation activities by introducing and training urban, suburban, and rural area youth and their supporting adults in fishing, boating, archery, hunting heritage, agriculture, conservation, and wildlife education activities. His 17 years of experience with the organization serve him well on the board, where he focuses on recruiting new hunters from all backgrounds.

Pride, who is an alumnus of the Episcopal Academy and attended Temple University's Fox School of Business for economics and marketing, grew up in Philadelphia and has a solid grasp on the diverse population of Pennsylvania's largest city, where many have come from areas where hunting and the outdoors were important.



**TODD A.
PRIDE**

DISTRICT 9:

Carbon, Berks, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, and Schuylkill counties

Commissioner Schwalm grew up in Branchdale, Schuylkill County and has extensive experience in the outdoors. He has been a hunter in Pennsylvania for 52 years and has hunted in 20 states and three Canadian provinces. He is a Hunter-Trapper Education instructor and actively involved in mentoring youth hunters, in addition to involvement in many conservation organizations. He is especially proud of his involvement with the Jerry Zimmerman National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter JAKES event. Schwalm has a bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg University in education and is employed by LB Water in Selinsgrove as a sales consultant, where he'll put his business experience and sense of responsibility to work on the board.

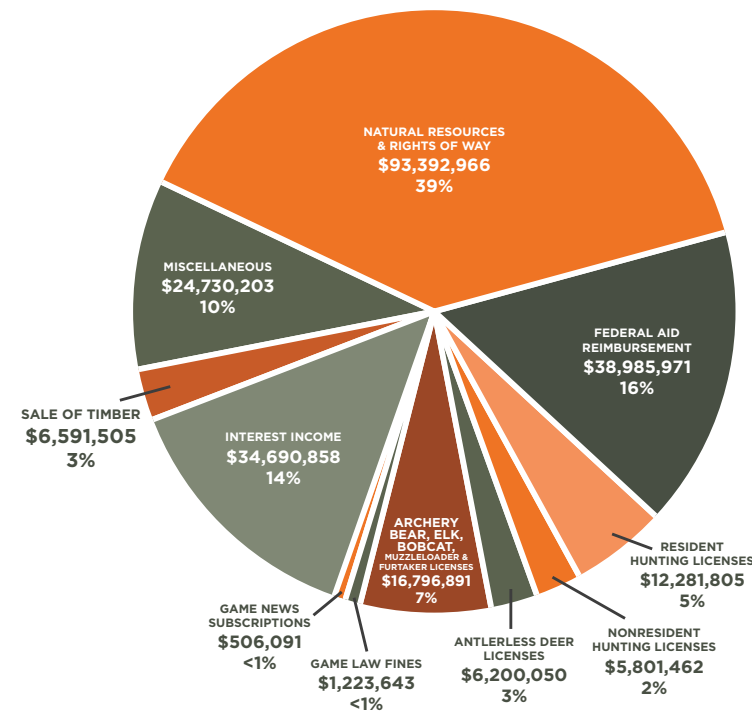


**ROBERT C.
SCHWALM**

2023-2024 FINANCIALS

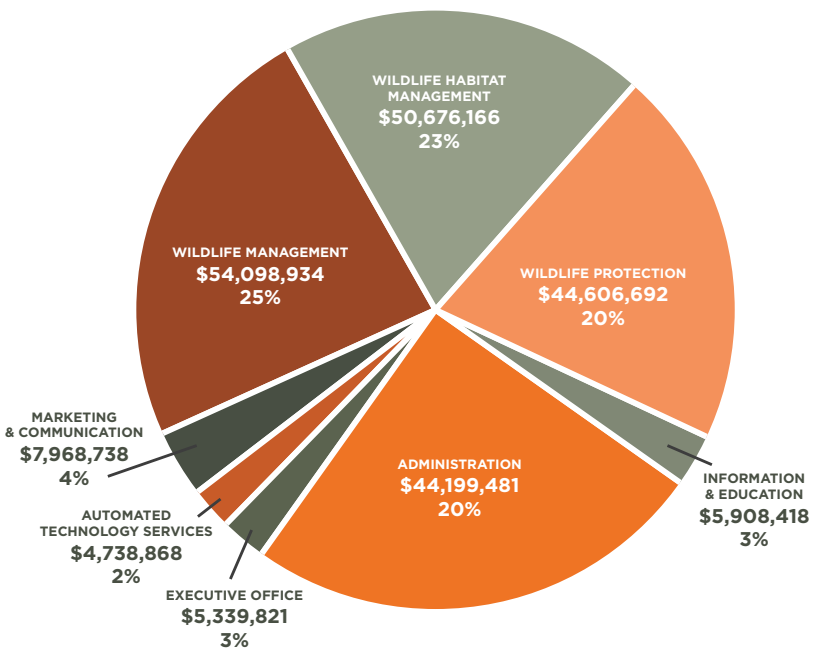
GAME FUND 2023-24 REVENUE

FISCAL YEAR END JUNE 30, 2024



GAME FUND 2023-24 EXPENDITURES

FISCAL YEAR END JUNE 30, 2024



The accompanying statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance, as well as the balance sheet, were prepared using the modified accrual basis of accounting, whereby revenues are reported when they become both measurable and available to finance expenditures of the current period. Expenditures are recognized when the fund liability has been incurred; that is, they will be paid with current financial resources.

Using this method, revenues for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, were \$241,201,445. This represents a decrease of \$207,090,447 (46.2%) from the prior year's revenues of \$448,291,892. Revenues from gas and oil lease royalties were \$85,915,299 this year, down \$220,949,115 from the prior year revenue amount of \$306,864,414. The decrease correlates with a worldwide decrease per unit of energy prices. The increased energy prices in fiscal year 2022 incentivized the opening of more wells and increased withdrawals from existing wells, but the lower prices had the opposite effect on revenue for this year. Revenues from gas and oil lease ground rentals decreased \$11,264,103 for the same reason.

Sales of adult nonresident hunting licenses increased this year, up \$187,464 (3.51%) over last year. Revenue from adult resident hunting licenses fell \$249,295 this year.

Sales from the Federal Duck Stamp (eDuck), which allows residents and nonresidents to hunt migratory waterfowl within Pennsylvania and any other state, were \$1,066,500 this year, a 22.42% increase over last year's amount of \$871,164.

Total expenditures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, were \$215,537,118. This represents an increase of \$14,369,426 (7.14%) over the prior year's expenditures of \$201,167,692.

State share employee benefits and training costs increased \$5,551,085. This increase is due to both raises and an increase in staffing by filling open positions.

Payments to other state agencies for specialized services increased \$2,565,714 due to funding being transferred to the Department of General Services for the construction of several new buildings. This funding is held in restricted accounts and then transferred as needed to cover construction expenditures.

There was a \$5,427,542 increase in land purchases and acquisition costs, which is the result of the agency taking advantage of more land acquisition opportunities in this fiscal year compared to the prior fiscal year.

Telephone and radio communication expenses decreased \$1,639,321 due to the consolidation of the six regional dispatch centers into a centralized dispatch center at headquarters. A new centralized dispatch center was constructed in the agency headquarters building.

Purchases of equipment and machinery decreased \$2,306,831. Last fiscal year, pandemic-related global supply chain issues were largely resolved, resulting in elevated orders being fulfilled. Purchases this fiscal year trended toward a return to pre-pandemic levels.

The Game Fund's Restricted Fund Balance was \$525,927,223 at the fiscal year-end on June 30, 2024. This represents an increase of \$25,664,327 (5.13%) from the June 30, 2023, balance of \$500,262,896. The increase is attributable to the increase in agency construction projects.

Act 138 of 2002 amended the Game Code sections relating to mandatory spending. The Game Code stipulates that a minimum of \$4.25 from each resident and nonresident license and a minimum of \$2 from each antlerless deer license issued for which the full fee has been paid is to be used for habitat improvement, development, maintenance, protection, and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game and wildlife on all lands under the control or operations of the Game Commission, including lands enrolled in the Game Commission's Hunter Access Program and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the Game Commission. The monies collected for the above are deposited into a separate account.

The Game Commission reported that during fiscal year 2023-24, the number of resident and

nonresident licenses sold totaled 1,459,583 and the number of antlerless deer licenses sold totaled 1,092,422. This level of sales mandated that a minimum of \$8,388,072 be expended and appropriated into a separate restricted account for the above-mentioned habitat improvement purposes. This year \$9 million was committed in the restricted account, an excess of \$611,928 over the requirement.

GAME FUND BALANCE SHEET

JUNE 30, 2024

ASSETS	
CASH	\$1,663,142
TEMPORARY INVESTMENTS	\$58,930,330
LONG TERM INVESTMENTS	\$500,299,168
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	\$298,740
DUE FROM OTHER FUNDS	\$325,711
TOTAL ASSETS	\$561,517,091
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE	
LIABILITIES	
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES	\$17,288,605
SECURITIES LENDING OBLIGATIONS	\$16,240,023
DUE TO OTHER FUNDS	\$1,321,246
DUE TO POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS	\$18,132
DUE TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS	\$93,571
DUE TO FIDUCIARY	\$328,903
UNEARNED REVENUE	299,388
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$35,589,868
FUND BALANCE	
RESTRICTED FUND BALANCE-ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	\$525,927,223
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE	\$561,517,091

GAME FUND STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

REVENUES	
LICENSES AND FEES	\$59,353,386
INTERGOVERNMENTAL	\$38,985,971
CHARGES FOR SALES AND SERVICES	\$96,899,085
INVESTMENT INCOME	\$34,690,858
MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	\$9,703,967
CAPITAL LEASE/INSTALLMENT PURCHASE	\$1,568,178
TOTAL REVENUE	\$241,201,445
EXPENDITURES	
RECREATION AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT	\$189,348,083
CAPITAL OUTLAY	\$26,157,746
INTEREST	\$31,289
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$215,537,118
NET CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE	\$25,664,327
FUND BALANCE JULY 1, 2023	\$500,262,896
FUND BALANCE JUNE 30, 2024	\$525,927,223

THIRD PARTY OBLIGATIONS

The Game Commission is the beneficiary of third-party obligations to mitigate damages or otherwise provide funds for projects or research. In the majority of these instances, the obligation is for land. The IBAT obligations are specifically subject to United States Fish and Wildlife Service control and approval.

IBAT - \$815,000 Rice Poseidon - \$510,000

