

NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

MARCH 18-24, 2013

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Northern Spotted Owl ©Tania Thomson;
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Branching Out

Trees and Their Value
for Wildlife and People

TRUNK



BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Scientific Name: *Poecile atricapillus*

Description: Black-capped chickadees are small, round-bodied songbirds named for their crown of black feathers. They are a favorite

backyard bird, and many people attract them with nest boxes and suet feeders. Chickadees have excellent memories that help them keep track of places where they've hidden food. They excavate their own nests in the soft, rotting trunks of snags, particularly of alder and birch trees.

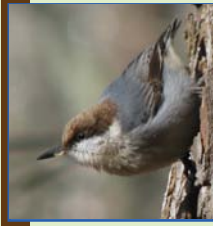
U.S. Habitat and Range: Black-capped chickadees are found near forest edges, especially where willows and cottonwoods grow. They like high altitudes and are found year round from New England to the west coast. They're also found in Alaska, where their range overlaps with the boreal chickadee.

Fun Fact: A chickadee's alarm call sounds just like its name. Chickadees warn their flocks of nearby predators like owls and hawks by sounding out "chickadee-dee-dee!"

Conservation Status: Increasing.

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BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH

Scientific Name: *Sitta pusilla*

Description: Brown-headed nuthatches are songbirds with brown crowns, bluish-gray wings and backs, and a creamy white

underside. They are one of the few birds that use tools to find food, and tree bark is their utensil of choice. As they forage, they use loose pieces of bark to pry up other bark in search of insects underneath. Discarded bark tools are sometimes used to cover up caches of pine seeds.

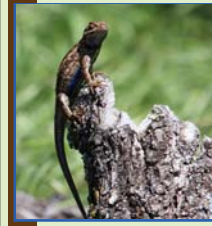
U.S. Habitat and Range: Brown-headed nuthatches are pine specialists. They nest in snags or in tree cavities left behind by woodpeckers. They're found almost exclusively in the Southeast U.S.

Fun Fact: Unlike woodpeckers, which use their stiff tails to balance on vertical surfaces, nuthatches can hold tight with just their legs. This enables them to walk up as well as down tree trunks.

Conservation Status: Declining due to logging of their pine forest habitats.

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EASTERN FENCE LIZARD

Scientific Name: *Sceloporus undulatus*

Description: Fence lizards are medium-sized "spiny lizards," meaning they have rough, pointed scales on their backs. They spend their days basking in sunny areas on fences, trees, and rocks. With their gray to brown coloration, they blend in well with tree bark. When approached, a fence lizard runs up the nearest tree trunk and pauses on the opposite side to avoid being seen. If their pursuer circles around, the fence lizard continues to ascend in a spiral motion until it is out of reach.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Eastern fence lizards are primarily found in dry, open woodlands. They are widely distributed from southern New York south to Florida and west into Utah and Arizona.

Fun Fact: Fence lizards may seem drab in color from above, but the bellies and throats of males are a dazzling blue.

Conservation Status: Stable.

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INDIANA BAT

Scientific Name: *Myotis sodalis*

Description: Indiana bats are medium-sized, insectivorous bats that use echolocation to find food. They migrate south each fall to reach hibernation sites in caves, and head north at the end of winter

to seek out roosting sites in trees. Females and their young fit snugly in tree cavities and under the loose bark of shagbark hickories, elms, oaks, and other deciduous and evergreen trees.

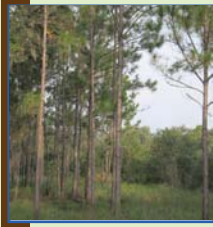
U.S. Habitat and Range: Thousands of Indiana bats cluster together in hibernacula each winter. In the summer, they pick tree roosts in warm, sunny areas with a nearby water source. They're found in the east from the Appalachian Mountains west to Iowa and Oklahoma.

Fun Fact: Bats have to be lightweight to fly. Indiana bats have 10 inch wingspans, but they weigh less than two nickels.

Conservation Status: Federally listed as endangered. Indiana bats are declining due to human disturbances at their few winter roost caves, vandalism, and the fungal disease white nose syndrome.

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LONGLEAF PINE

Scientific Name: *Pinus palustris*

Description: Longleaf pine is an evergreen conifer that got its common name for having the longest leaves of the eastern pine species. The needlelike leaves, which come in bundles of three,

can grow up to 18 inches long! Over 30 endangered and threatened species, including red-cockaded woodpeckers and indigo snakes, rely on longleaf pine for habitat.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Longleaf pines grow in a patchy distribution in the southeast Atlantic and Gulf states. Mature trees have thick, scaly bark which makes them fire resistant, and longleaf pines require frequent fires to successfully complete their life cycle.

Fun Fact: Longleaf pine is the state tree of Alabama and North Carolina.

Conservation Status: Longleaf pines currently cover about 3 percent of their historic range. The species was decimated due to logging, land clearing, fire suppression, and competition from plantations of other pine species. Restoration of longleaf pine forests has become a major conservation priority in recent years.

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RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER

Scientific Name: *Picoides borealis*

Description: Red-cockaded woodpeckers are small birds named for the cockade—a decorative line of red feathers—on the adult male's head. Many birds excavate hollows in dead trees, but red-cockaded woodpeckers spend years carving out nesting cavities in live pines. They prefer old-growth pine trees that are infected with red heart rot, because the wood is weaker and easier to remove. The trees bleed sap around the entrance to the nest, which keeps away predatory tree-climbing snakes.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Red-cockaded woodpeckers are found in mature pine forests in the Southeast.

Fun Fact: Nest cavities left behind by this woodpecker are used by bluebirds, chickadees, titmice, flying squirrels, and other woodpeckers!

Conservation Status: Federally listed as endangered. Red-cockaded woodpecker habitat—specifically longleaf pine forests—has been disappearing for many years. Fire suppression and logging of mature pine trees has pushed this species to the brink of extinction.

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SHAGBARK HICKORY

Scientific Name: *Carya ovata*

Description: It's easy to see how shagbark hickories got their name! Their trunks are characterized by long, peeling strips of bark under which some animals, like Indiana bats, make their homes. Shagbarks

are deciduous, flowering members of the walnut family. They produce tasty nuts enjoyed by black bears, foxes, mice, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, and a number of birds every fall. Humans eat hickory nuts too, and we use the trees' tough lumber for firewood and tool-making.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Shagbark hickories grow best on moist soils in humid climates in eastern and midwestern parts of the country.

Fun Fact: Andrew Jackson, the seventh U.S. president and Major General during the War of 1812, was nicknamed "Old Hickory" because he was considered to be as tough as a hickory tree.

Conservation Status: Stable. Several diseases and pests, including canker rot fungus and hickory bark beetles, attack shagbark hickories.

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TAN JUMPING SPIDER

Scientific Name: *Platycryptus undatus*

Description: The tan jumping spider is a frequent visitor of tree trunks and other vertical structures. Their flattened bodies allow them to fit into tight spaces. During the winter they spin themselves into cocoons

and hunker down under the peeling bark of a shagbark hickory. Tan jumping spiders are one of about 5,000 jumping spider species, many of which are considered to be quite cute! They're tiny, furred, and they have enormous front-facing eyes.

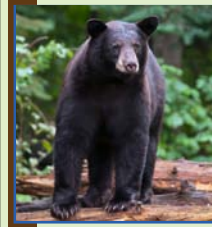
U.S. Habitat and Range: Tan jumping spiders are found in the eastern U.S. They prefer to live on vertical surfaces like tree trunks, fence posts, and even house walls!

Fun Fact: Jumping spiders use their excellent vision to look for prey and to visually communicate with other jumping spiders.

Conservation Status: Tan jumping spiders are an understudied species, and not much is known about their conservation status. Like all spiders, they are important to protect, because they help to control insect populations.

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BLACK BEAR

Scientific Name: *Ursus americanus*

Description: Not all black bears are black—their fur can range from pure white to dark brown or black. Some bears have a white patch on their chests. They have a short, inconspicuous tail, longish ears, and small, dark eyes. Black bears have relatively short claws which enable them to climb trees.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Because of their versatile diet, black bears can live in a variety of habitat types. They inhabit coniferous and deciduous forests and open alpine habitats. They can live just about anywhere they can find food, but largely occur where there are trees. Their range covers most of North America, from Alaska to northern Mexico.

Fun Fact: All bears are sexually dimorphic, meaning adult males are much larger than adult females. A large male black bear can exceed 600 lbs in weight while females seldom exceed 200 lbs.

Conservation Status: Stable

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