

# South Carolina Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

## From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

*Three new barrier island sanctuaries (Bird Key Stono, Crab Bank, and Deveaux Bank Islands) have increased nesting for black skimmers, brown pelicans, royal terns and sandwich terns. South Carolina's proactive conservation efforts are helping to conserve these species before they become more rare and costly to protect.*

**S**outh Carolina's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy emphasizes a cooperative, proactive approach to conservation. The needs of fish and wildlife translate into conservation actions that can cross multiple scales, with treatments recommended at the species, habitat and regional level. Eight recurring conservation action areas are emphasized: education and outreach, habitat protection, invasive and nonnative species, private land programs, public land management, regulatory actions, survey and research needs, and urban and developing lands.

### *Protecting Imperiled Land, Water, and Wildlife*

### **Providing Island Sanctuaries to Vulnerable Nesting Seabirds**

Seabirds are a high priority group in South Carolina's conservation strategy due to declines in their populations throughout the state. Seabirds often lay eggs in shallow scrapes or rough nests directly on the ground, and can easily be crushed underfoot. Human presence

makes adults abandon their nests, leaving eggs to sun damage or predation by gulls. In 2006, South Carolina designated three barrier islands as sanctuaries – Bird Key Stono, Crab Bank, and Deveaux Bank Islands – where public access is limited. The island closures have increased nesting for black skimmers, brown pelicans, royal terns and sandwich terns. South Carolina's proactive conservation efforts are helping to conserve these species before they become more rare and costly to protect.



Banding royal terns chicks on Deveaux Bank/  
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



Black skimmers nesting in increased numbers on Crab Bank/South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



Chamberlain's dwarf salamander/South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

### **Gathering Information to Take Action Improving Knowledge of South Carolina Salamanders**

The southern dusky salamander and Chamberlain's dwarf salamander are "in need of conservation" in the conservation strategy, due to local declines and incomplete data on distribution and abundance. A State Wildlife Grants-funded project aims to better understand the ecology, life history, and habitat requirements of these species and better understand the relationships within this group of salamanders. This improved information will allow better site-specific management actions for the seepage wetlands. So far, studies indicate that the southern dusky salamander does not actually occur in South Carolina but that four other previously unknown dusky salamander species do live in the South Carolina Coastal Plain. Clarifying this information will allow South Carolina to make the best cost-effective management decisions to conserve these amphibians and the habitats they depend upon.

### **Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People Managing for Priority Wildlife on Agricultural Lands**

Cooperation with private landowners is essential to fulfilling conservation goals in South Carolina's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy since more than 90 percent of the state's land is privately owned. A State Wildlife Grant-funded project delivers technical guidance to private landowners and agricultural producers to improve and restore habitat for priority wildlife. Three new agency biologists are working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to incorporate habitat restoration for priority wildlife species into Farm Bill conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve, Environmental Quality Incentives, Wetland Reserve, Wildlife Habitat Incentives, and Grassland Reserve programs. This collaboration will help ensure future generations can enjoy the natural South Carolina landscape.

### **Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies**

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SCDNR explains the importance of native plants in the Aiken County WHIP project site/ South Carolina Department of Natural Resources