



Earth Day (Any Day) Wildlife Sightings

What better day than Earth Day to take some time to observe and appreciate the rich web of life of which we are a part - and document it!

Wildlife sightings from the public are incredibly useful to NJDEP Fish & Wildlife. Our [NJ Wildlife Tracker](#) web app makes it easy to report your observations of [Threatened and Endangered species](#), as well as *any* native nongame species and *any* wildlife on roadways in NJ.

Throughout the year, NJFW's social media will highlight just some of the *hundreds of species* we'd like your sightings of. Here, we start with a few covert creatures relevant to habitat connectivity and CHANJ.



Nope, not Ewoks...Earthlings! North American Porcupines caught on motion camera. Courtesy of Joe Garris, NJFW

First up, the **North American Porcupine** (*Erethizon dorsatum*). Porcupines are a nongame species with a "Secure/Stable" status in NJ, found up north in the Kittatinny Ridge & Valley and Highlands regions. They're not frequently spotted, so public sightings can help biologists monitor population trends and distribution.

Porcupine-ipedia:

- 'Porcupine' comes from 'porc d'épine,' meaning 'thorny pig' in Middle French. Porcupines are actually large rodents.
- An adult has about 30,000 quills, which are modified hairs for self defense (and warmth, too). Porcupines don't throw their quills but can bristle them and charge backwards at an attacker, swatting their spiny tail like a medieval morning star.
- Baby porcupines are called porcupettes - golly that's cute! Female North American Porcupines typically have just one young, in spring or early summer following a 7-month gestation period.
- Breeding season is September-December. Males sometimes engage in physical battles as they compete for females.
- Porcupines are drawn to road salt in winter, which can unfortunately lure them into dangerous encounters with vehicles.

We also encourage the public to report sightings of these animals, both of which are Species of Greatest Conservation Need in NJ with "Special

Concern" status:



Northern Diamond-backed Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin terrapin*) - Sightings of this brackish water turtle ***in the water*** are especially helpful to the Endangered and Nongame Species Program. On-road sightings are useful to the CHANJ project.



Eastern Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*) - This toad-like amphibian is a good hider; they're nocturnal, live mostly below ground, and breed during torrential rain events, sometimes on just one night a year between April and August.

Earth, right? Good stuff 

-
- [Learn more about CHANJ](#)
 - [Sign up for the CHANJ email list](#)
 - [Report wildlife sightings](#) to NJDEP Fish & Wildlife
-



Questions? [Contact Us](#)



SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:

[Manage Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Help](#)