



Bellwether Magazine

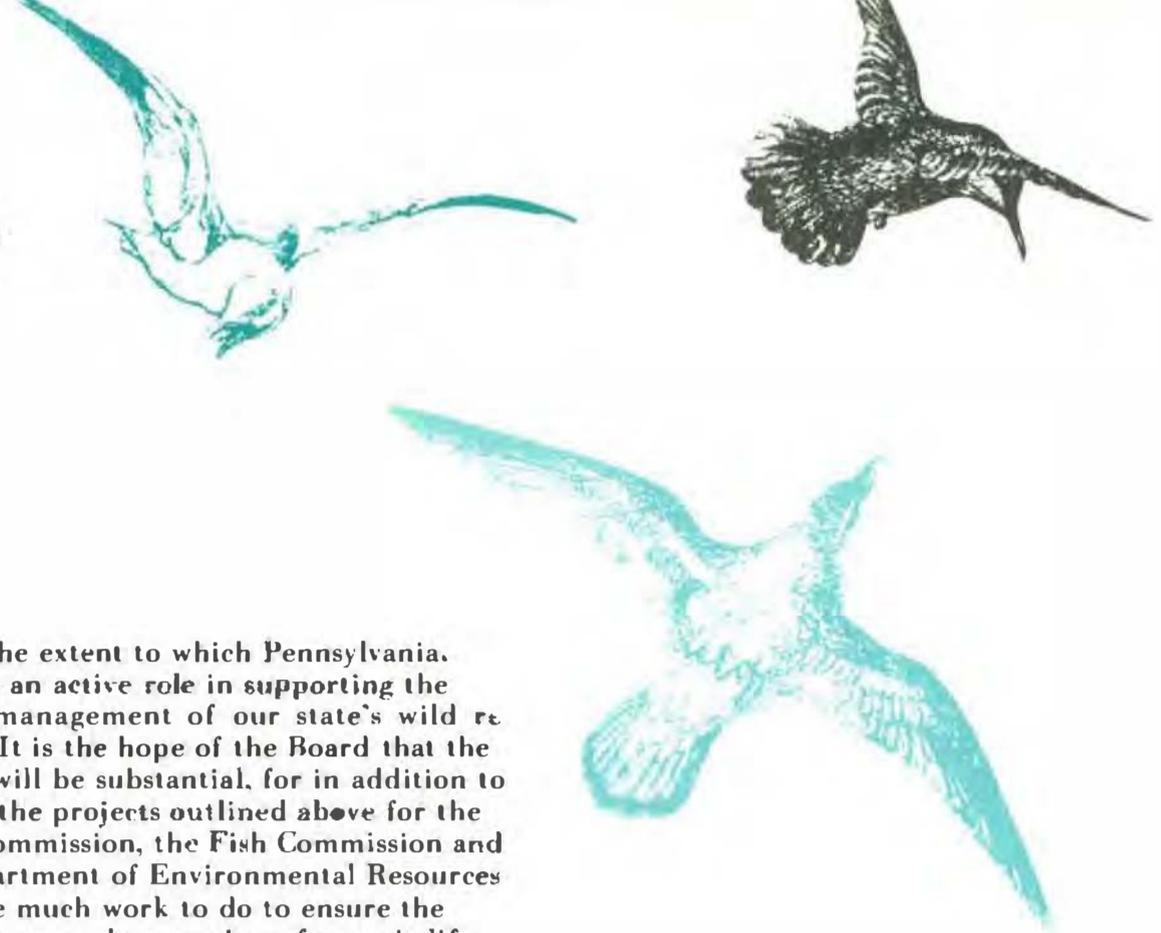
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Do Something Wild

"Do Something Wild"



Pennsylvanians filing state income tax returns this year will have an opportunity to "Do Something Wild." Under legislation enacted this past summer, Pennsylvania joins several other states that allow taxpayers to designate all, or a portion of their state income tax refund to help nongame wildlife.

In line with the new Wild Resource Conservation Act signed by Governor Thornburgh last June, the revenue department has provided space on the 1982 Pennsylvania tax form where persons may contribute to the Wild Resource Conservation Fund.

Taxpayers will be able to designate what portion of their income tax refund they would like to donate to help Pennsylvania's wild resource management agencies ensure the future welfare of nongame birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Revenue generated from the tax check-off will also be used to manage and protect wild plants.

Pennsylvania Game Commission personnel are pleased that the Legislature has approved the tax check-off in Pennsylvania. They are hopeful that sufficient funds will be generated to fund new and ongoing nongame programs.

Since 1979, the Game Commission has allocated about \$30,000 to aid the American bald eagle and re-introduce the peregrine falcon and osprey. Next year, the Commission plans to allocate additional funds to bring more osprey from surrounding tidewater states and to re-establish a new colony of river otters in northcentral Pennsylvania. The Wild Resource Conservation Fund could provide the money to fund these projects.

The new fund will be administered by the Wild Resource Conservation Board comprised of the executive directors of the Game and Fish Commissions, the Secretary of Environmental Resources, and the majority and minority chairpersons of the House Conservation Committee and the Senate Environmental Committee.

The Board has no way of knowing how much money will be generated by the state's new Wild Resource Conservation Act. This spring, following the filing of 1982 state income tax returns, will provide an indica-

tion of the extent to which Pennsylvania will take an active role in supporting the proper management of our state's wild resources. It is the hope of the Board that the "Fund" will be substantial, for in addition to some of the projects outlined above for the Game Commission, the Fish Commission and the Department of Environmental Resources also have much work to do to ensure the management and protection of aquatic life and wild plants under their jurisdiction.

The Department of Environmental Resources, with the creation of the Wild Resource Conservation Act, is now charged with the responsibility for the management and protection of Pennsylvania's native wild plant species. The inclusion of wild plants in the program is unique to the Pennsylvania Act. Other states which have adopted similar tax check-off funding for nongame wildlife have no provisions for wild plants in their programs.

Money allocated to the Department of Environmental Resources by the Wild Resource Conservation Board will be used to provide proper management programs to collect information and conduct research on the population, distribution, and habitat needs of native plant species and plant communities. The department is required to classify wild plants to determine management measures necessary to protect special plant populations and may establish a cooperative statewide system of public and private wild plant sanctuaries.

The Environmental Quality Board, a twenty-one-member panel of state agency officials, legislators, and citizens charged with adopting regulations administered by DER, will issue regulations relating to the taking, possessing, transporting, exporting, processing, selling or offering to sell, or shipping of wild plants.

The EQB will establish regulations over the digging, harvesting, sale, and exploitation

of vulnerable species in danger of being lost because of beauty, economic value, or other factors which make them prime targets for being removed from their native habitats.

The many users of our state's vast parks, game lands, forest lands, and recreation areas will receive benefit from the fund. A wider variety of animal and plant life will be available due to proper management and enhancement of habitat. The Wild Resource Conservation Fund will increase the educational and recreational opportunities for all of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Because of Pennsylvania's unique tax structure, many taxpayers are not entitled to a refund. However, if they desire to help finance the program, those persons may contribute directly. They simply may draft a check or money order payable to the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and mail it to Comptroller, Box 2063, Harrisburg, PA, 17120.

Because of the importance of ensuring the welfare of nongame wildlife and wild plants, the Wild Resource Conservation Board is hopeful thousands of Pennsylvanians will decide to "Do Something Wild" as they file their 1982 state income tax returns.

You may write for additional information by addressing your request to: Wild Resource Conservation Board, P.O. Box 1467, Harrisburg, PA, 17120.

