

## **Foreword**

Georgia is blessed with a tremendous amount of natural diversity. The largest state east of the Mississippi River, Georgia contains portions of five major physiographic provinces and a wide variety of habitats ranging from mountain peaks to underground caverns, from dry granite outcrops in the Piedmont to pitcherplant bogs in the Coastal Plain, and from headwater streams to the mouth of the mighty Altamaha River. This impressive environmental diversity supports an equally impressive diversity of native plants and animals. Conservation of this wildlife diversity is extremely important to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), its conservation partners, and the people of Georgia, and is the goal of this Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

A strategy is not a blueprint or a path chiseled out of stone. It is a set of prioritized methods and approaches to reach an identified goal. This conservation strategy articulates a set of interrelated wildlife conservation goals and prioritizes methods and approaches to reach these goals. This strategy also identifies specific actions, resources, and partnerships that are necessary for achievement of these goals. Through the development of this conservation strategy, Georgia DNR and its conservation partners have indicated their commitment to maintain the natural heritage of this great state and have further indicated how this objective will be met.

Implementation of this conservation strategy will provide tangible benefits for Georgia's wildlife species and citizens alike. In addition to providing eligibility for continued funding under the State Wildlife Grant Program, this strategy will help DNR and other organizations prioritize conservation efforts based on need and opportunity, resulting in more effective wildlife conservation programs. Additional funds will be made available to conserve imperiled and declining species and their habitats through interagency and public-private partnerships. Funding for land acquisition will provide more opportunities for public recreation, including hunting, fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation. In addition, funds made available for habitat restoration will benefit a wide variety of game and nongame species on public and private lands.

This document is the product of many individuals currently working in Georgia DNR and other organizations. In addition, it reflects decades of previous work by hundreds of researchers, conservationists, educators, and wildlife enthusiasts who helped establish the foundation upon which this strategy is based. In developing the strategy, we consulted representatives from a wide range of agencies and organizations and sought input from the citizens of the state through public meetings, targeted presentations, and other methods. To these contributors, past and present, and to the people of Georgia, we dedicate this document.

Noel Holcomb,  
Commissioner