The New Haven Register
NEW HAVEN, CONN.
D. 156,0.0 SUN. 121,792

MAY 29 1975

# UConn Hopes To Save Endangered State Species

Staff Reporter

STORRS — About 200 Connecticut plants and 60 of the state's animals and birds are tenuously hanging on to the last pieces of land which they need to survive.

In hopes of saving them, three UConn biologists are doing a statewide survey for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). They are compiling an inventory of the endangered species and are developing Connecticut's first complete biological zone map.

Joseph Dowhan, a UConn doctoral candidate in plant ecology, is heading the team, which includes Lee Mehrhoff, a plant taxonomist and Bob Craig, a vertebrate zoologist. The study is being funded in part by the U.S. Agriculture Department.

For the past eight months the men have been making lists of candidates for the rare species lists. Now they are beginning travels around the state seeking the kinds of habitats where rare plant and animal species tend to congregate.

Perhaps the most poignant story of a seriously threatened species is that of the osprey, or fish hawk. This brown and white bird once flourished along the Connecticut shoreline and at the mouth of the Connecticut River. It is now perilously close to extinction.

Craig explained that the osprey's demise is the result of chemical pollutants, particularly persistent pesticides like DDT and a chemical used in making plastic, PCB.

These chemicals contaminate fish, which, when eaten, destroy the birds' reproductive ability. So, while the chemical doesn't kill the individual osprey, it causes the genetic death of the entire species.

On a brighter note, Dowhan and Craig discovered a small group of rare beach plants in their recent travels. Dowhan said he wouldn't tell the whereabouts of the plants because of unscrupulous collectors. "I can't express the thrill of seeing such a species in the wild," Dowhan said.

MONS 031299