

Ohio Wildlife Action Plan

What is a wildlife action plan?

Congress asked each state to develop a wildlife action plan, known technically as a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (CWCS). These proactive plans examine the health of wildlife and prescribe actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

Ohio snapshot

Geography: The landscape of Ohio is characterized by forestlands, vast agriculture, Lake Erie, and the Ohio River, interspersed with a number of large cities and a statewide population of more than 11 million citizens.

Landscape: Ohio ranks 47th per capita among the 50 states in the

amount of public land available for outdoor recreation. Ohio's private lands make up approximately 95% of the state, creating a challenging environment for fish and wildlife management.

Wildlife: Ohio enjoys a diverse wildlife community including healthy populations of white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, bald eagles, and numerous other game and wildlife diversity species. Lake Erie is one of the most productive fresh water systems in the world, and is often referred to as the "walleye capital of the world". In recent years populations of osprey, Karner blue butterflies, trumpeter swans, and other threatened and endangered species have increased substantially.

Ohio's planning approach

Ohio has operated under a comprehensive management system for more than 15 years. The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is an extension of this larger planning system, which includes a long-term strategic plan to address the threats and opportunities for Ohio's fish and wildlife resources.



Great Spangled Fritillary/Ohio DNR

The Division's comprehensive management system incorporates all aspects of the agency, including personnel, fiscal, technical, and biological information, into a system of checks and balances that ensures effective and efficient decision making and positive results for Ohio's wildlife resources. The Division of Wildlife's CMS is highlighted by a long-range strategic plan, regular communication and interaction with constituents and employees, and regular reviews and evaluations of activities in order to improve effectiveness.

The Division's strategic plan, as well as the Comprehensive Wildlife Conserva-

"This plan allows Ohio to protect endangered species as well as their habitat for future generations to enjoy. Perhaps more importantly, it will help prevent species from becoming rare or endangered and ultimately more expensive and difficult to protect and restore. Ohio's natural heritage will surely be more secure with this plan in place."

*- Samuel W. Speck,
Director, Ohio Department
of Natural Resources*

"Ohio's Wildlife Action Plan is a landmark document that will guide wildlife diversity conservation in Ohio for many years. Implementing the plan will certainly help restore endangered species and prevent other species from becoming rare or endangered."

*- Steven A. Gray, Chief,
Ohio Division of Wildlife*

tion Strategy, focuses on wildlife, their habitat, and people of the state. The Plan approaches fish and wildlife conservation with diverse strategies that involve not only the Division of Wildlife, but also private landowners, conservation organizations, and other governmental agencies.



Sandhill crane/Ohio DNR



Eastern Spadefoot Toad/Ohio DNR

Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Ohio

Loss and degradation of wildlife habitat continues to be the primary threat to Ohio’s wildlife, although invasive species and emerging wildlife diseases are also significant threats and will certainly be more important in the future. Examples of current threats include the loss of habitat to a variety of development interests, the introduction and expansion of invasive species such as the Asian Carp and purple loosestrife, and the continued threat from a number of wildlife diseases such as West Nile Virus and rabies.

Asian Carp: Various species of Asian carp continue to expand their range in the

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species of Conservation Concern*	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels	81	31	28
Snails	169	0	
Crayfish	20	1	1
Insects	Thousands	22 (terrestrial)	64
Fish	156	40	37
Amphibians	14	10	6
Reptiles	70	22	7
Birds	200 (breeding)	89	27
Mammals	56	25	5
Totals		240	175

* While all terrestrial wildlife are considered “species of conservation concern,” 168 species will be given increased attention. Aquatic “species of conservation concern” includes those that have demonstrated low or declining populations.

Wildlife highlights

Key Habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
Rivers and Streams Ownership: Mix of public and private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shovelnose sturgeon • Lake sturgeon • Purple catspaw • Northern riffleshell • Eastern hellbender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of riparian corridor habitat • Dams • Cattle in streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect riparian corridor in target watersheds through purchase or conservation easements. • Remove dams that no longer serve a useful purpose. • Exclude cattle from streams with fencing in target watersheds.
Oak Savannas Ownership: both private and public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karner blue butterfly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of habitat • Extirpated from the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through purchase and/or conservation easement, protect remnant oak savanna habitat focus area. • With a network of partners, develop and implement a conservation plan to reintroduce and establish a self-sustaining wild population of Karner blue butterflies.
Forestland Ownership: private and public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerulean warbler • American redstart • Ruffed grouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest fragmentation • Inappropriate proportions of age-classes and forest community composition to sustain wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through purchase, conservation easements, and land management agreements, conserve forest habitat (60,000 acre areas) within designated focus areas. • Inventory all forest habitat within the focus area to establish baseline data. • Implement management practices to conserve appropriate age-class and forest composition to ensure viable self-sustaining forest-dependent species.

Examples of recommended actions to conserve Ohio's wildlife

Midwest through a number of water systems such as rivers, canals, and reservoirs. Their ultimate impact is unknown, but early indications show that they will have a significantly negative impact on native aquatic vertebrates, invertebrates and plant species.

Urban Growth

The Ohio Legislative Service Commission reports that from 1960 to 1990 urban land use expanded by almost five times the growth rate of the overall population of the state. This growth puts increased pressure on wildlife habitat and creates a complicated atmosphere for natural resources management.

Working together for Ohio's wildlife

Ohio is home to more than 700 conservation organizations. The Division of Wildlife has on-going interaction with these grass-roots constituent groups, as well as with



Cave salamander/Ohio DNR

statewide and regional NGO's, in order to understand their concerns and issues related to Ohio's wildlife resources. In addition to this regular communication, the Division undertook five constituent group meetings specific to the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, in addition to holding a statewide meeting of key conservation organization leaders. These meetings highlighted the CWCS and the Division's overall planning efforts and stra-

tegic direction. More than 250 participants attended these meetings, including representatives from The Nature Conservancy, the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association, the Columbus and Cincinnati Zoos, The Ohio Lepidopterists, Ohio Biological Survey, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Columbus Metro Parks, American Electric Power, Pheasants Forever, U.S. Forest Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ohio Audubon, and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. Each meeting included a participant survey to determine their concerns and interests. Appropriate comments were incorporated in the final draft of the CWCS.



Bobcat/Ohio DNR

Assn. of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

David Chadwick
Wildlife Diversity Associate
444 North Capitol St., NW
Suite 725
Washington D.C., 20001
Tel: 202.624.7890
chadwick@fishwildlife.org
www.teaming.com • www.fishwildlife.org

State Contact

Verdie Abel, Wildlife Planner
Ohio Division of Wildlife
2045 Morse Rd., Building G
Columbus, OH 43229-6693
Tel: 614.265.7020
Verdie.Abel@dnr.state.oh.us
www.dnr.state.oh.us



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