



THE ILLINOIS WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

DEFINING A  
VISION FOR  
CONSERVATION  
SUCCESS



*Illinois spans nearly 400 miles from north to south. Across this range of latitude, the state hosts tremendous biological diversity, from Ice Age relicts like the Iowa Pleistocene snail on rocky outcrops in the northwestern corner of the state, to bird-voiced treefrogs in 1,000-year old cypress swamps at the southern tip. In between live 12 million people, reaping the benefits of fertile soils, 26,000 miles of streams and rivers, and other natural treasures.*



**Grasshopper Sparrow**



**Prairie Cicada**



**Clouded Crimson Moth**

Changes in wildlife and habitat have been a mixed bag of shortcomings and successes in recent decades. Bald eagles and river otters, once endangered, are now thriving. Meanwhile, greater prairie-chickens—the signature bird of the tallgrass prairie—barely hang on in the Prairie State. Water quality and many fish populations have improved dramatically, but a quarter of our freshwater mussels are extinct or extirpated. Game animals such as white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and Canada geese are doing well, while bobwhite are not. The amount of forest in Illinois has doubled over the past century, but, in spite of efforts like the Conservation Reserve Program, the state has less than half as much grassland today as in 1950. The Mississippi Flyway and Lake Michigan shoreline continue to bring spectacular concentrations of migratory birds to Illinois, and the state has long been a leader in identifying and conserving high-quality natural areas. Invasive plants, animals and diseases continue to arrive, harming native wildlife, degrading natural areas, and complicating conservation efforts.

In 1994, the Teaming With Wildlife coalition formed to secure funding for comprehensive conservation. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) was proposed as an excise tax on outdoor gear, and then as a use of offshore oil and gas production royalties. In 2001, the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program was created to provide funding for non-game wildlife conservation, and was allocated to states on a formula basis. As a condition of receiving SWG funding, Congress charged each state with developing, by October 2005, a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan focused on species in greatest conservation need and their associated habitats. The cooperative efforts of conservation organizations and the public resulted in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, defining a vision for conservation success.

**The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan applies the principles of conservation biology to a coordinated set of on-the-ground actions.** The Wildlife Action Plan began by considering all wildlife and involving everyone with an interest in wildlife conservation: conservationists, sportsmen, scientists, and members of the community. All forms of wildlife—aquatic and terrestrial, vertebrates and invertebrates, endangered species, game and non-game—are included in the Wildlife Action Plan, by focusing on the habitat they need, rather than a cumbersome species-by-species approach. More than 800 people willingly assisted with developing the plan through workshops, contributing information and ideas, and offering critical reviews. The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan meets the challenge of linking resources with the diverse conservation efforts of various organizations and individuals into a strategic framework that effectively protects species.

**The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan is a proactive and dynamic process.** By identifying wildlife with declining populations or special needs, conservation will be more effective—and less controversial—than if such efforts wait until the populations become endangered and very difficult and costly to recover. This philosophy is simply stated as “keeping common species common.” The plan is being updated continuously as we learn more about our natural resources, monitor progress, evaluate effectiveness, and respond to changing conditions.

**The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan defines a vision for conservation success.** The goals defined in the Wildlife Action Plan are based on the diversity and abundance of wildlife that maintain the state’s biodiversity for the long term, and satisfy our recreational and economic needs for angling, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing. These wildlife objectives are translated into the habitat needed to support them—how much is needed, the quality that should be maintained, and locations where it will have the greatest benefit. The vision of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan fulfills our responsibility to conserve wildlife and the places they live for future generations.

**The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan is a science-based approach to identifying conservation priorities and crafting solutions.** Scientists compiled and analyzed an enormous amount of data to assess the location, size, and condition of all of Illinois’s wildlife and habitat.

Wildlife	Total number	Species in greatest need of conservation*	Threatened or endangered
Mussels	61**	29	24
Snails	170	25	2
Insects	About 17,000	347	12
Crustaceans	207	22	10
Fish	187	80	31
Amphibians	41	14	8
Reptiles	60	23	16
Birds	300***	83	32
Mammals	59	20	9
Totals	About 18,000	638	144

\* Based on seven criteria including: low or declining populations, dependence on a rare or vulnerable habitat, and usefulness as an indicator of the health of a community or habitat.

\*\* An additional 19 species are extinct or have been extirpated from Illinois.

\*\*\* Approximate number of regularly occurring species; including vagrants and accidentals, 432 species have been documented.

**Red-Headed Woodpecker**



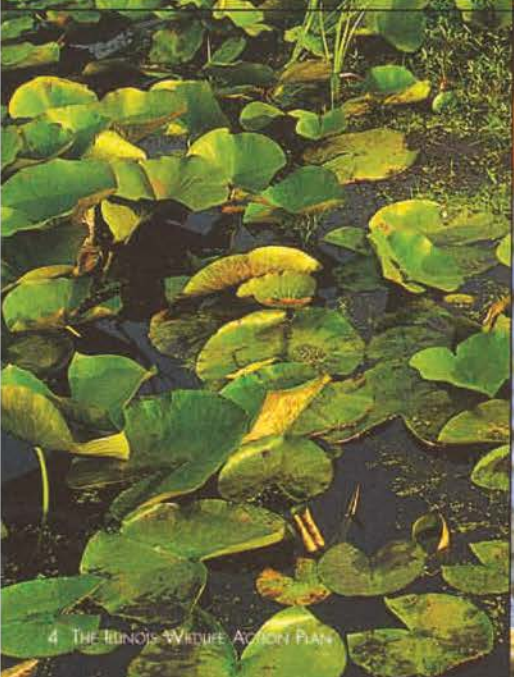
**Gray Fox**



**Yellow-Billed Cuckoo**



**Muskrat**





Southern Redbelly Dace



Smallmouth Bass



Using a consistent set of criteria, scientists identified species in greatest need of conservation—those species of wildlife with low or declining populations, or indicative of the health and diversity of Illinois' wildlife and habitat.

In much of Illinois, agriculture and development limit available habitat. The condition of most habitats is degrading due to fragmentation, invasive species, absence of natural disturbances such as fire, and other factors. Invasive species in particular are an increasing problem, and conservationists need new prevention and control tools to successfully meet the challenge. Changes in the human population affect how we conserve wildlife: how we deal with urban sprawl, provide access to natural areas and open space, and accommodate changes in recreational preferences.

The actions described in the Wildlife Action Plan emphasize a broad spectrum of natural resource benefits beyond addressing the challenges facing wildlife and habitat: clean water, soil conservation, human health and safety, economic diversity, and sustainability. The actions range from interstate projects that enhance shared resources such as our large bordering rivers and the Great Lakes to improvements at specific natural areas.

With an excellent network of universities, museums, the Illinois Natural History Survey, and other institutions, Illinois has a knowledge of its biological resources that is envied by most other states. Still, there are gaps in the knowledge of some species and habitats, and new ideas need to be cultivated to address chronic and emerging problems. Monitoring wildlife responses through protocols described in the Action Plan will ensure that conservation actions contribute to our natural resource goals. Through adaptive management and a dynamic Wildlife Action Plan, new challenges and opportunities that arise will be addressed quickly.

**The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan tailors our actions to different scales, and matches conservation partners with sources of support.** Every

action is linked to a problem it is designed to solve and focused on a natural resource objective it will help achieve. The next step is to determine the best tool for each job, whether it be a program supported by a state or federal agency, local land protection, or habitat management. Knowing the partners who are already working at each scale, or in each area, the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan matches them with the sources of support they need—equipment, personnel, funding—to turn the vision for wildlife conservation in Illinois into an on-the-ground reality.

At the statewide level, actions are grouped into seven overlapping campaigns, based on habitats and common issues:

***Farmland and Prairie Campaign***—Expanding and improving grassland, shrub and wetland habitats in agricultural landscapes, with economic incentives and technical assistance for private land owners.

***Forests Campaign***—Improving wildlife habitat, ecological integrity, and economic value of the state's forests and savannas through appropriate, sustainable forestry practices.

***Wetlands Campaign***—Restoring and enhancing wetlands for wildlife habitat, reduced flooding, and improved water quality.

***Streams Campaign***—Reduce sedimentation and enhance biodiversity by protecting riparian areas, stabilizing stream banks, and repairing in-stream habitat.

***Invasive Species Campaign***—Working together to prevent, contain and manage invasive plants, animals and diseases that threaten natural areas, wildlife and human health.

***Land and Water Stewardship Campaign***—Providing public and private land owners with the knowledge and tools to best manage healthy forests, grasslands, wetlands, streams and lakes with abundant wildlife.

***Green Cities Campaign***—Making cities and towns more livable through smart growth, protecting open space, and providing wildlife recreation opportunities.

**Northern Bobwhite**



**Badger**



**Slender Glass Lizard**



**Ornate Box Turtle**



For each of the 14 **Natural Divisions** of Illinois—distinctive regions with similar geologic history and biological features—biologists identified the key habitat types and fish and wildlife species unique or important to the region. Recognizing that issues vary regionally and that actions need to be centered on regional needs, the approaches outlined for each natural division reflect the diversity of Illinois.

## Sample from the Western Forest–Prairie Natural Division

### Natural Communities

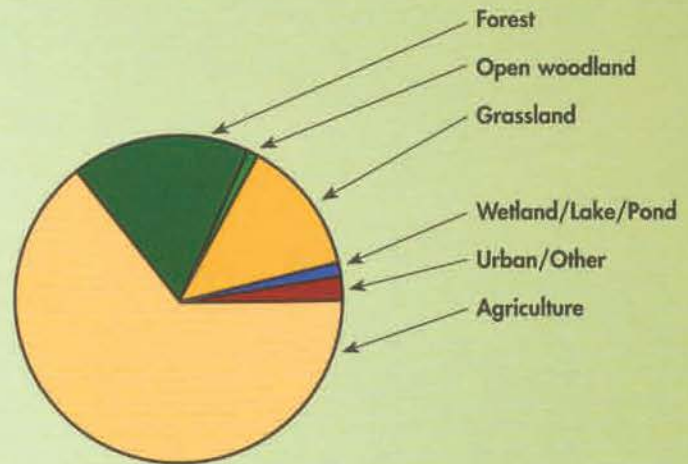
Savannas  
Barrens  
Hill Prairies

### Emphasis Wildlife

Bewick's wren  
Slender glass lizard  
Northern bobwhite



### Land cover



## The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan

Using a philosophy of “keeping common species common,” scientists, sportsmen, conservationists, and members of the community worked together on the Wildlife Action Plan, advocating creative and sensible solutions. By focusing on wildlife and natural areas before problems become severe, the Action Plan is a cost-effective, long-term approach. Conserving and restoring natural places will ensure clean water for people and wildlife. Pollution and diseases affecting wildlife, such as DDT and the West Nile Virus, are often early indicators of problems that, if left unchecked, can affect people too. Wildlife, and the places they live, are important to us, our family traditions, and future generations. They’re worth the investment.

Development of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan was supported by State Wildlife Grant Program funding (Federal Aid Project T-2-P-1). **For more information and copy of the complete Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, please visit: <http://dnr.state.il.us>.**

### Credits

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**Conservation Opportunity Areas** are sites with special importance for conserving species in greatest need of conservation and natural communities. While not every species occurs in one of these areas, efforts here are essential to conserving wildlife and natural areas for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

**FORESTS**

- 1 Wisconsin Driftless Forest
- 3 Mississippi Palisades
- 10 Castle Rock, Lowden Miller
- 18 Lower LaMoine River
- 21 Pere Marquette
- 23 Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands
- 29, 30 Shawnee National Forest, Trail of Tears

**SAVANNAS AND BARRENS**

- 1 Wisconsin Driftless Forest
- 3 Lost Mound
- 6 Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex
- 8 Upper Des Plaines River
- 15 Kankakee Sands
- 19 Siloam Springs
- 25 Hill Prairie Corridor
- 29, 30 Shawnee National Forest

**GRASSLANDS**

- 3 Lost Mound
- 10 Nachusa Grassland
- 11 Green River
- 14 Midewin, Goose Lake Prairie
- 17 Sand Prairie-Scrub Oak
- 22 Prairie Ridge
- 27 Pyramid

**WETLANDS**

- 4 Sugar, Pecatonica Rivers
- 5 Crow's Foot Marsh
- 6 Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex
- 7 Illinois Beach
- 15 Mokence Wetlands
- 16 Middle Illinois River
- 23 Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands
- 24 Middle Little Wabash
- 29 LaRue Swamp
- 31 Cache River, Cypress Creek

**RIVERS AND STREAMS**

- 2 Apple River
- 4 Sugar, Pecatonica Rivers
- 5 Kishwaukee River
- 8 Upper Des Plaines River
- 9 Rock River
- 12 Upper Mississippi River
- 13 Lower Fox River
- 15 Kankakee River
- 20 Vermilion River Watershed
- 28 Wabash River

**LAKES AND PONDS**

- 6 Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex
- 7 Illinois Beach
- 12 Upper Mississippi River
- 16 Middle Illinois River
- 26 Sink Hole Plain

**CAVES**

- 1 Wisconsin Driftless Forest
- 26 Sink Hole Plain
- 29 Shawnee National Forest

**BEACHES, BLUFFS AND ROCK OUTCROPS**

- 1 Wisconsin Driftless Forest
- 3 Hanover Bluff, Mississippi Palisades
- 7 Illinois Beach
- 21 Pere Marquette
- 25 Hill Prairie Corridor
- 29, 30 Shawnee National Forest, Pine Hills



ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY



OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

