

# Arkansas 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. 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.

## Arkansas snapshot

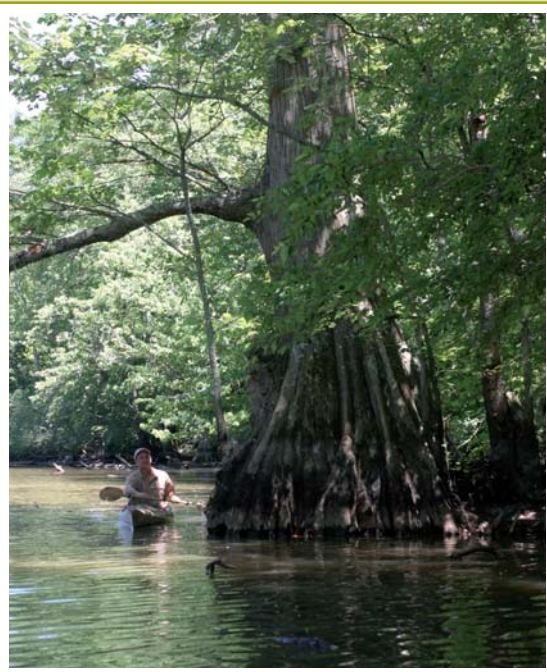
**Geography:** Arkansas is a study in contrasts, with dramatic mountains in the Ouachitas, vast alluvial plains in the Mississippi River delta, and deep, rich hollows in the Boston and Ozark mountains.

**Wildlife highlights:** The species diversity is rich and the citizenry takes wildlife matters seriously: over 85 percent of the public in a recent poll declared that they are concerned or very concerned about the impacts of human activity on wildlife.

## Arkansas's planning approach

Expert Arkansas biologists gathered over the course of a year to assemble a list of 369 species prioritized by greatest conservation need. Participants also identified threats associated with each of these species' habitats, and identified conser-

vation actions necessary to prevent the species from declining. This information was organized in a format that can be easily updated as the state improves its



Bayou DeView near where Ivory-billed woodpecker was first spotted in 2004

knowledge of little-known species and determines what is needed to protect the overall health of habitats that house and feed many of these species. Special care was taken to communicate to the public during this process and to listen to and incorporate constituents' views.

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Arkansas

The Arkansas action plan identifies 18 categories of threats facing wild-

*"I have supported full funding for State Wildlife Grants in past appropriation cycles and we are proud to have a wildlife champion like Senator Lincoln in the Arkansas delegation. As president of the National Governors Association this year I hope to move a resolution for a dedicated funding mechanism for species of greatest conservation need.*

*- Mike Huckabee,  
Governor of Arkansas*



Spotted Skunk/Mundy Hackett

Painted Bunting/Joel Neal



*“Our CWCS is intended to be a useful planning tool for both professional and citizen conservationists in Arkansas. We involved our major partners from the beginning. Their response has been more than gratifying. It has been heroic—considering the scope of the work. I am also struck by the receptivity of Arkansas citizens to this initiative. They have demonstrated again support for the broad array of wildlife and seem supportive of assembling the scientific underpinnings for sound decision making.”*

*- Scott Henderson, Director, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission*

life. These are hydrological alteration, nutrient loading, habitat destruction, sedimentation, biological alteration, chemical alteration, alteration of natural fire regimes, altered composition/structure, excessive herbivory, extraordinary competition for resources, extraordinary predation/parasitism/disease, groundwater depletion, habitat destruction or conversion, habitat disturbance, habitat fragmentation, resource depletion, riparian habitat destruction and toxins/contaminants.

For example, habitat loss results from changes in the land and waters that adversely affect the homes and food of species of conservation concern. Each species has special needs, and alterations in the habitat may reduce their ability to survive or thrive. Learning what the special needs are, communicating these to land

managers, taking conservation actions and monitoring the species response are necessary to keep species and habitats healthy. An example of this would be conversion of prairie or woodlands to non-native fescue pasture, which reduces the survivability of some species, such as ornate box turtles and bobwhite quail.

Habitat alteration, such as road construction, can also introduce sediments into flowing waters to the detriment of fish, mussels, dragonflies and other aquatic species that require clear, clean water.



Lorance Creek Natural Area. Lower Mississippi River Bottomland habitat/AGFC

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species in need of conservation **	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels	83	52	10
Insects	1137	63	1
Crayfish	64	24	2
Other Invertebrates	389	44	1
Fish	224	50	3
Amphibians	71	25	0
Reptiles	114	14	1
Birds	321	78	5
Mammals	78	19	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2481</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>24</b>

\*Source: Natureserve.org (may include extirpated species)

\*\*Species of conservation concern were identified and prioritized using Natureserve's rankings of imperilment (statewide and global). Threatened and endangered species are included in the list of species of conservation concern.

### Wildlife highlights

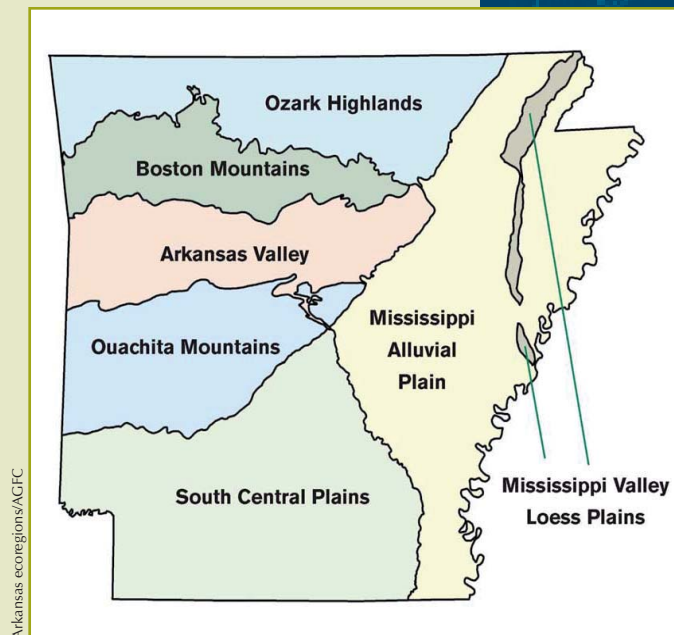
Highlight habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
Natural, large pools of water	Lake sturgeon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial harvest</li> <li>Habitat destruction</li> <li>Dams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restrict commercial harvest in Mississippi River</li> <li>Reintroduce sturgeon to appropriate habitat</li> <li>Restore fish passage in dammed rivers</li> </ul>
Prairies, glades, pasture and woodland	Painted bunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cowbird nest parasitism</li> <li>Caged bird trade</li> <li>Habitat loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce threat of parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds</li> <li>Reduce capture of birds outside of the US for the pet trade</li> <li>Maintain or restore open habitat with scattered shrubs</li> </ul>
Along streams and rivers in forested mountains and hills	Ozark clubtail Dragonfly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dams</li> <li>Sedimentation</li> <li>Municipal/ industrial point source pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More research is needed to determine best actions for conservation.</li> <li>Additional research is needed to learn about distribution and population status.</li> </ul>

### Recommended actions to conserve Arkansas's wildlife

## Working together for Arkansas's wildlife

AGFC engaged the public through a series of news releases, brochures, e-mail contact lists and a continually evolving website. The Commission involved the community of natural resources professionals by inviting their participation in the creation of a comprehensive survey of species and habitats in the state. AGFC also conducted an attitude and opinion survey to understand public and stakeholder attitudes prior to a campaign to involve and inform members of targeted interest groups.

Other steps included a letter that was sent to leaders of 107 key intermediary organizations that represent or provide information to individuals and landowners with an interest in species and habitat conservation, and an informational mailing that was sent to 2,600+ individuals, primarily landowners and members



Arkansas ecoregions/AGFC

*“I sincerely hope this program survives the budget axe in Washington, D. C. The future health of our nation depends on healthy ecosystems and a balance between the built and natural communities.”*

*- Kenneth L. Smith,  
State Director,  
Audubon Arkansas*

of hunting clubs who participate in the Acres for Wildlife program. This mailing included the informational brochure, an invitation to register online for one of five stakeholder meetings, and links to the website. Nearly 250 individuals attended five evening stakeholder meetings in Hope, Jonesboro, Fayetteville, Lake Village and Little Rock in June 2005. Each meeting was designed to elicit public involvement and comment

using story-telling exercises, a presentation and small group discussions and response.

*“This is a unique tool that represents all wildlife species, not just demand species, and I believe it represents an ideological shift to comprehensive management for ecosystem health.”*

*- Alan G. Newman, Forest Supervisor,  
Ouachita National Forest*



Sherfield Cave/Ethan Inlander, TNC



Cave crayfish/David Kampwerth



Karst habitat, Boston Mountain Ecoregion/Ethan Inlander, TNC

*“The CWCS is a coordinated approach that has pooled the resources of a larger group of conservation partners to fund research and improvements for species of greatest conservation need.”*

*- Kay McQueen, Director of  
Conservation Programs,  
Arkansas Field Office of The  
Nature Conservancy*

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