

# Kentucky 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.

## Kentucky snapshot

**Geography:** Diversity is the keyword when describing Kentucky. The rugged mountains and valleys with flat ridge tops found in the east contrast sharply compared to the flat bottom lands and sloughs of the west. Between these extremes can be found the cave country surrounding Mammoth Cave and the gently rolling hills of the Bluegrass Region.

**Landscape:** Approximately 93 percent of Kentucky is privately owned. Successful stewardship of the state's plants and animals rests firmly in the hands of private landowners. Working with landowners is critical to the



Kentucky Wren/KDFWR

success of our Wildlife Action Plan.

**Wildlife:** Many different habitat types, ranging from highland forests, grassland barrens, and swamps support a variety of animals. Small head-water streams, winding creeks, and the expansive Ohio and Mississippi Rivers support an even more diverse group of fish and freshwater mussels.

## Kentucky's planning approach

Kentucky's Wildlife Action Plan provides background information and the framework needed to protect the state's wildlife species and their habitats. Kentucky used a species-based approach to developing the Action Plan. A list of 251 species were identified as having a great need for conservation work. De-



Black Bear in the snow/KDFWR

*"This action plan is Kentucky's roadmap for sustaining fish and wildlife diversity, but it is not a panacea. By itself, it is simply pages, pictures, maps, and words. However, in the hands of united fish and wildlife professionals, it will become a powerful motivating force for change."*

- Jonathan Gassett, Ph.D.,  
Commissioner, Kentucky  
Department of Fish and  
Wildlife Resources



Stream habitat/ KDFWR

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Kentucky

Kentucky's Action Plan identified priority conservation actions for both terrestrial and aquatic habitat guilds. Protecting habitat through acquisition, easements, or economic incentives with private landowners was an important strategy across species and habitat groups, as was developing partnerships with other state and federal agencies and other conservation organizations in order to protect habitat. There is also a great need for long-term monitoring of at-risk species to detect population trends for species that cur-

tailed accounts were developed for each species that included distribution maps, habitat requirements, and condition of their populations. In order to give consideration to both individual species and habitat types, species were assigned to groups (guilds) based on the similarities of habitat used, then conservation strategies and actions were then assigned to the habitat groups.



Copperbelly water snake/KDFWR

*“The health of these species is a barometer of the overall health of the environment. If we can conserve and enhance the habitat for these species, we believe the quality of life for people will be enhanced as well.”*

*- Mark Cramer, Deputy Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources*

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species in need of conservation	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels	134	46	21
Fish	269	59	7
Amphibians	74	22	0
Reptiles	80	27	1
Birds	361	81	6
Mammals	94	16	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>38</b>

*\* The criteria are based on the list of species monitored by Kentucky Heritage Program and NatureServe Global Rank. The list was then modified based on biologists' knowledge of state endemics, species that are not well studied, and potential re-introductions.*

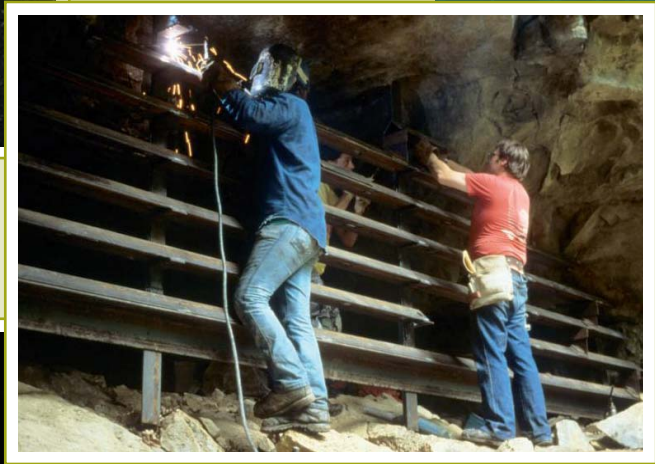
### Wildlife highlights

Highlight habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<b>Large Rivers (in Current)</b>	Fish: Pallid sturgeon, Alabama shad  Mussels: Elephantear, Orangefoot Pimpleback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction/ Operation of impoundments.</li> <li>• Channelizing and ditching of streams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with dam and hydroelectric operators to enhance and protect aquatic habitat.</li> <li>• Provide financial incentives to protect riparian corridors and watersheds.</li> </ul>
<b>Cave Streams</b>	Northern cavefish, Southern cavefish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alteration of surface runoff flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition and conservation easements of critical aquatic habitat.</li> <li>• Work with municipalities, industries, and government agencies to reduce physical impacts of non-point and storm water runoff</li> </ul>
<b>Cumberland Highland Forest</b>	Black mountain salamander, Common raven, Eastern spotted skunk, timber rattlesnake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss and degradation of special and unique microhabitats</li> <li>• Conversion of native forest to short-rotation crop trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to prioritize land protection, acquisition, and restoration projects that work toward connecting blocks of habitat and restoring ecological processes.</li> <li>• Provide information and guidance to the mining industry and contractors on reclamation practices that benefit wildlife.</li> </ul>

**Recommended actions to conserve Kentucky's wildlife**



Cave crayfish/KDFWR



Cedar Post Cave, Gate/KDFWR



Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bat/ KDFWR

*“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take ranks with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”*

*- Theodore Roosevelt*

rently lack long-term data sets. This is particularly true for aquatic species and herpetofauna.

## Working together for Kentucky's wildlife

Since 1993 extensive public surveys have been conducted in order to understand public attitudes and preferences for wildlife conservation in Kentucky.

This detailed, pre-existing data was used in developing the Action Plan. Several news releases, an article in Kentucky Afield Magazine, and links on the Department's web page were used to inform the public of the state's efforts. Additionally, input was solicited from 44 experts representing five federal agencies, three state agencies, eleven universities, and seven private organizations to provide detailed information needed to develop the Action Plan.



Cumberland arrow darter/KDFWR



Ohio River study/KDFWR



Fishing/KDFWR

### Assn. of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

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

### State Contact

Mark S. Cramer  
Deputy Commissioner  
Kentucky Department of Fish and  
Wildlife Resources  
#1 Game Farm Road  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
Tel: 502.564.3400  
mark.cramer@ky.gov  
<http://fw.ky.gov/>