

# Louisiana 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.

## Louisiana snapshot

**Geography:** Louisiana has 30% of the coastal wetlands found in the contiguous 48 states. The Atchafalaya River basin swamp is the largest in the nation.

**Landscape:** More than 10% of Louisiana is in federal and state managed areas. Some half-million acres of private lands, most of which have been reforested, have been enrolled in federal conservation programs to benefit wildlife.

**Wildlife:** The largest wading bird colony in North America can be found at Miller's Lake, which housed some 52,000 nesting pairs of egrets, herons, night herons, and other species in 2004. More than 900 vertebrate species have been recorded in the state.

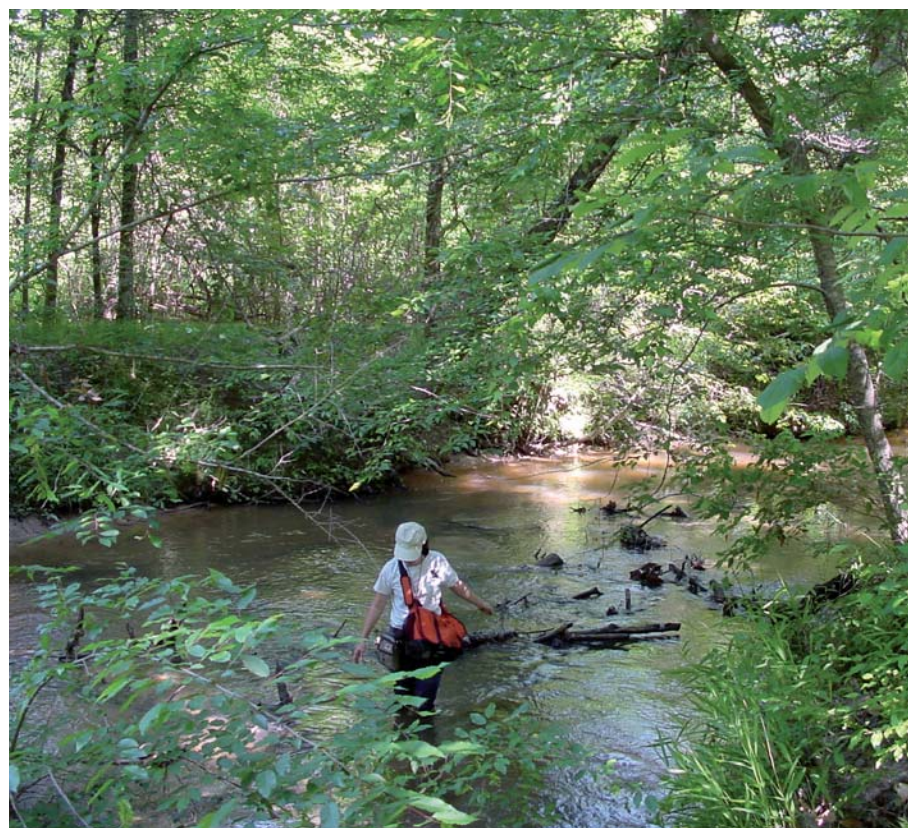
## Louisiana's planning approach

Louisiana's Wildlife Action Plan provides a common strategic framework and information resource to help conserve Louisiana's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and the lands and waters on which they depend for survival. The action plan is primarily a habitat-based approach to conserving rare and declining wildlife species. It focuses on habitats such as open water marine environments, riverine systems, and 38 terrestrial habitats, including

agricultural-crop-grasslands. Conservation actions were developed with a variety of partners for these landscape features on a regional basis. The action plan also looks at the conservation needs of 240 rare or declining wildlife species and identifies conservation priorities for implementation. By combining habitat and wildlife-specific approaches, and considering multiple scales, Louisiana's action plan will help to guide the conservation of the state's full wildlife diversity until 2015.

*"Louisiana's Wildlife Action Plan will guide the agency's efforts in habitat management to benefit those species flourishing now and focus on those needing additional care for their continued survival long term."*

*– Parke Moore, Assistant Secretary LDWF Office of Wildlife*



Louisiana Natural Heritage Program Zoologist, Inés Maxit, surveys a stream for mussels listed as a species of conservation concern/LDWF

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Louisiana

Eighteen threats to wildlife were identified in Louisiana. Four of these were commonly identified as primary factors in affecting terrestrial habitats throughout the state: *habitat destruction or conversion, habitat fragmentation, habitat disturbance, and altered composition and*

*structure of the habitat.* In aquatic systems, the following five threats appeared repeatedly across basins: *modification of water levels or changes in natural hydrologic patterns, sedimentation, habitat disturbance, nutrient loading, and altered composition and structure.* Along the coast, the primary threat has been coastal erosion and subsequent changes in hydrologic patterns. For terrestrial forested habitat areas in Louisiana, the longleaf pine system was ranked as a habitat of

immediate priority due to its extensive historical and recent decline, and because more than 32 species of conservation concern are found in that habitat type. Lack of data in aquatic systems, both freshwater and marine, highlighted the need to do more inventory and research in these systems. Regardless of the ecological system (terrestrial or aquatic), improving dialogue with existing partners and developing new partners remains the biggest challenge to implementing the plan.



Pallid sturgeon, a species of conservation concern/LDWF

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species in need of conservation*
Mussels	64	30
Crawfish	34	14
Butterflies		23
Freshwater Fish	148	28
Marine Fish	Approx. 400	13
Amphibians	52	15
Reptiles	82	30
Birds	400*	69
Mammals	70	18
<b>Totals</b>		<b>240</b>

\*includes 160 breeding and 240 migrant species

### Wildlife highlights

Highlight habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<b>Eastern upland longleaf pine Forest</b> <i>Ownership:</i> private and industrial timber companies	Ornate chorus Frog, Brown-headed nuthatch, Henslow's sparrow, Yucca giant skipper, Scarlet kingsnake, Northern scarlet snake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial/ industrial development</li> <li>Fire suppression</li> <li>Invasive/alien species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate landowners, adjacent residents, developers, and the general public about the crucial role of prescribed burning in the management of longleaf pine systems (multi-agency, multi-group effort).</li> <li>Work with land managers/hunting clubs/extension agents, etc. to discourage the placement of food plots in this habitat type.</li> <li>Promote utilization of state and federal cost share programs (FLEP and NRCS programs) to address invasive species problems.</li> <li>Promote value-added products produced from longleaf pine to encourage landowners to replant longleaf pine instead of loblolly pine.</li> <li>Provide additional cost share funds through programs such as FLEP in order to drastically reduce or eliminate landowners' costs associated with conducting prescribed burns on their property.</li> <li>Investigate the availability of additional cost-share funding opportunities, through FLEP, FPP or other programs, for landowners to reduce the cost of longleaf pine management.</li> </ul>
<b>Ouachita River Basin</b> <i>Ownership:</i> private and commercial	Elegant crawfish, Paddlefish, Steelcolor chiner, Pink mucket, Fatmucket, White heelsplitter, Black sandshell hickorynut, Alligator snapping turtle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Channelization of rivers or streams</li> <li>Construction of navigable waterways</li> <li>Crop production practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Crustaceans:</b> Continue surveys to update historic locality records in order to update abundance and distribution data for inclusion in the LNHP database.</li> <li><b>Mussels:</b> Surveys are needed to update historic occurrence records and develop new baseline data on current species population distributions and abundance.</li> <li><b>Alligator Snapping Turtle:</b> Baseline mark-release data were obtained during the late 1990s. New surveys are needed to obtain population trend data for this species.</li> <li>Improve partnerships with LDEQ, NRCS, TNC, LSU CoOp Extension Service and others to share data on threats to this watershed and participate in the development of future strategies to abate these identified threats.</li> <li>Prepare educational material on potential impacts of invasive species to the Ouachita River and its tributaries.</li> <li>Continue LDWF involvement in the environmental review process of all river related projects. Identify potential impacts and recommend appropriate mitigation.</li> <li>Develop education and outreach programs with NRCS to reduce sediments and nutrient loading within the Ouachita Basin.</li> </ul>

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

*“As the state recovers from the environmental impact of two major hurricanes in 2005, the state’s Wildlife Action Plan becomes additionally significant, at least short-term, for those species in areas where habitat damage was most severe.”*

*– Dwight Landreneau  
Secretary of the Louisiana  
Department of Wildlife  
and Fisheries*

## Working together for Louisiana’s wildlife

Committees of professional biologists within this and other state and federal agencies and universities, as well as from non-governmental organizations and the public at large, developed the list of species of conservation concern for this plan. The biologists met at multiple venues to analyze the threats for each habitat in each of six ecoregions across the state. Subsequently, conservation actions or strategies were developed in a series of seven focus group meetings across the state with invited representatives of conservation organizations, forestry, wildlife, and fisheries associations, industry, federal and state agencies, universities, and private citizens. The outcome of each meeting was posted on the Department’s web site to inform the public on how



Education is a key strategy in conserving the Louisiana Pine Snake, a species of conservation concern/LDWF

the plan was progressing and to solicit comments. Each iteration of the plan was posted on the web site, and comments were solicited.



Camp Marydale Girl Scout Camp joins the Louisiana Natural Areas Registry Program/LDWF

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