

Minnesota 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 lay the foundation for taking action to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

Minnesota snapshot

Geography: Minnesota lies at the center of North America where three major biomes meet: the prairie, the boreal forest and the eastern deciduous forest. This confluence creates a natural heritage rich in wildlife resources. Minnesota is water-rich, with approximately 10 million acres of wetlands, 69,000 miles of rivers, and 12,000 lakes. Minnesota's varied landscape and abundant natural resources provide resource-based economies important to all Minnesotans.

Management: Over 75% of Minnesota land is privately owned and 1.5% is in tribal ownership. Nearly 23% of Minnesota's land and all its waters are managed by local, state, or federal governments. Public lands include national forests, national wildlife refuges, state forests, parks, wildlife management areas, and scientific and natural areas. Conservation partners like The Nature Conservancy share in the management of a number of conservation lands.

Wildlife: Minnesota's opportunities for fishing, hunting, and wildlife-watching are world-renowned, with participation rates among the highest in the country. A natural diversity of wildlife, however,

is critical to supporting a healthy ecology, economy, and society. Minnesota has identified 292 species that have significant conservation need, including the Spruce Grouse, Karner blue butterfly, Lake sturgeon, Spectaclecase mussel, and the Eastern Timber wolf.



Bald eagle/USFWS, S. Hillebrand

is critical to supporting a healthy ecology, economy, and society. Minnesota has identified 292 species that have significant conservation need, including the Spruce Grouse, Karner blue butterfly, Lake sturgeon, Spectaclecase mussel, and the Eastern Timber wolf. The plan defines species in greatest conservation need as animals whose populations are rare, declining, or vulnerable to decline, as well as below levels desirable to ensure their long-term health and stability. The 292 identified species in Minnesota represent approximately one-quarter of the state's nearly 1,200 known native wildlife species.

The strategy's approach involves a partnership of conservation organizations working together to ensure that these species are sustained for future generations. Members of the partnership include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Audu-

Minnesota's planning approach

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife focuses on "species in greatest conservation need" and the habitats on which they depend. The plan defines species in greatest

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"Historic figures do not necessarily know that they are making history. A century ago, as Theodore Roosevelt implemented sweeping changes in how people viewed public land and conservation, many people were working behind the scenes to affect historic achievements. Decades and centuries from now, students of history and millions of Americans may look back at 2005 and 2006 as a key period in conservation. In a span of a few short months, each state fish and wildlife agency has submitted an action plan that will move us into the next phase of caring for our natural resources, and making America a healthier place for wildlife and people."

*– Gene Merriam,
Commissioner, Minnesota
Department of Natural
Resources*

bon Minnesota, and the University of Minnesota, as well as many other agencies and conservation organizations.

This plan outlines priority conservation actions that partners can adopt and adapt to their unique interests and capacities. The plan presents profiles for 25 ecologically defined landscapes within Minnesota (see ecological classification map on page 4). Key habitats for species

Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Minnesota

Habitat loss and degradation are the most significant problems facing wildlife in Minnesota, affecting forests, grasslands, lakes and wetlands. These habitat concerns impact not only species in greatest conservation need, but also the economic and cultural benefits of a healthy environment, including people's opportunity to enjoy quality outdoor experiences.

A lack of knowledge about wildlife species, their habitats, and management requirements limits informed decision-making and recommendations for protecting and managing habitats. Wildlife manag-



Swan Lake, Border Lakes Subsection, Cook County/D. Carlson



Gilt Darter/MN DNR, K. Schmidt

in greatest conservation need, a priority focus for action, are identified within each of these ecological landscapes.

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species in need of conservation*	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mollusks	120	39	30
Spiders	20	8	8
Crayfish	6	0	0
Insects	420	56	42
Fish	147	47	8
Amphibians	20	6	1
Reptiles	29	17	9
Birds	311	97	28
Mammals	84	22	16
Totals	~1200	292	142

**Species in greatest conservation need are defined as rare, declining, or vulnerable to decline.*

Wildlife highlights

ers need more surveys for species of greatest conservation need, and more applied research that directly benefits land managers. Information is the key to adaptive management. Sometimes, new information reveals that a species is doing worse than expected and more attention is needed. Other times, a species originally thought to be rare and declining is found to be fairly secure.

A lack of adequate information and education programs related to wildlife conservation reduces the opportunities for Minnesotans to appreciate, understand, and protect many little-known wildlife species.



Dry Sand-Gravel Prairie, Minnesota River Prairie Subsection, Glacial Lakes State Park/MN DNR, T. Whitfield

Examples of priority conservation actions

Projects	Key activities/findings	Outcomes
Accelerate completion of the County Biological Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found several new animal and plant species for the state. • Important habitats and rare features identified and mapped. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves our understanding of Minnesota’s natural resources. • Brings focus for areas of management, protection, and collaboration.
Statewide Mussel survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of mussel status and distribution, making Minnesota a national leader in mussel surveys. • Found 2 new species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an indication of the health of our water systems. • Aids in the management and protection of mussel populations.
Important Bird Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided technical assistance and survey work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of a statewide system of areas important for the management, protection and appreciation of Minnesota’s diverse bird population.
Habitat enhancement and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on key habitats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps ensure the stability and health of Minnesota’s wildlife.
Partnership grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of survey, research, and habitat enhancement projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds partnerships that aid in conservation.
Information management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database development and maintenance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential in making informed management decisions.

The decision to create the State Wildlife Grants Program in 2001 provided Minnesota with the ability to develop and support projects to better manage and understand Minnesota’s wildlife. This effort included the generation of information critical to the development of the action plan. A few examples are above.

“Our encounters with wildlife are as diverse as the neighborhoods and towns in which we live. Ensuring that wildlife remains a prominent component of our natural world for generations to come is an increasingly complex challenge. Minnesota’s State Wildlife Action Plan provides a strategic framework to direct and inform habitat conservation efforts throughout the state to ensure that we provide for the full array of Minnesota’s diverse wildlife community.”

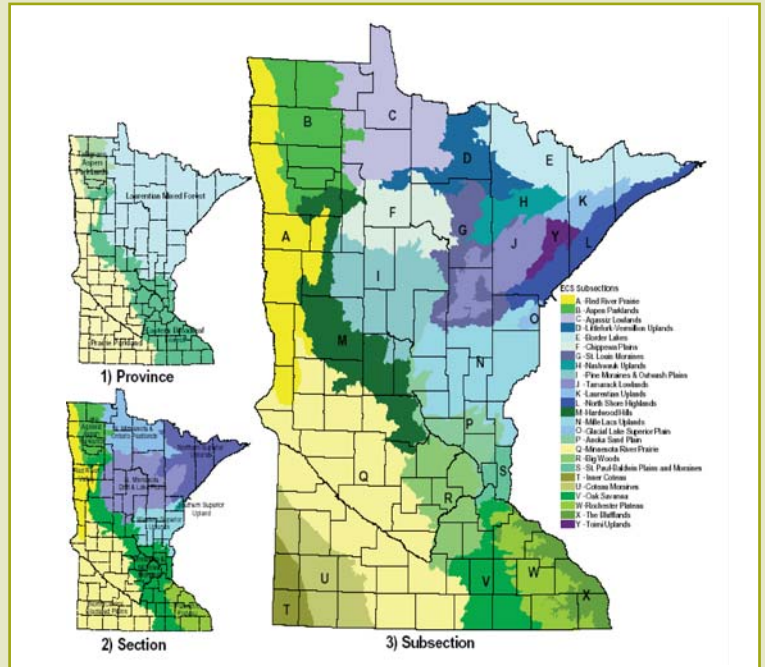
– Lee Pfannmuller, Director of the Division of Ecological Services, Minnesota DNR

“The Minnesota plan considers the unique natural resources, historic trends and public interests of the state. The Service was pleased to participate in the development of the Minnesota plan by identifying key natural resources at our national wildlife refuges, as well as trust responsibilities, such as migratory birds. We now look forward to continued partnership with Minnesota, to help address priority actions identified in its plan.”

– Robyn Thorson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Midwest Regional Director

Working together for Minnesota’s wildlife

The Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan created a project structure that engaged over 100 conservationists across the state. Individuals with a broad range of technical expertise—including knowledge of individual native species, habitats, native communities, and conservation planning—comprehensively reviewed the best available information to identify a set of species in greatest conservation need and create a conservation approach that seeks to ensure the survival of all Minnesota’s wildlife for future generations to experience and enjoy.



Ecological classification map of Minnesota



Black Crowned Night Heron/Stephen J. Maxson

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