

# South Dakota 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.

### South Dakota snapshot

**Geography:** The tallgrass prairie reaches its western boundary in eastern South Dakota, while rich, deep soils and abundant streams and rivers once made the area very desirable for settlement and farming. Western South Dakota's rolling terrain, wide open spaces, and native prairie also created a rich ranching heritage.

### Landscape and Wildlife:

Grasslands and prairie pothole wetlands in eastern South Dakota support some of the highest concentrations of breeding waterfowl and other wetland birds in North America. Much of the open landscape in western South Dakota is still intact, which will help the cause of such species as long-billed curlew, pearl dace, and burrowing owl. Meanwhile, although bisected by 4 dams, there are still places along the Missouri River where a person can experience the wide and meandering "Big Muddy," as well as some of its unique wildlife, including paddlefish, pallid sturgeon, least terns, piping plovers, and bald eagles. The Black Hills' forests, streams, and

grasslands support many species found in few other places in the state, such as the American dipper, Townsend's big-eared bat, and the longnose sucker.



Burrowing Owl/Doug Blacklund

### South Dakota's planning approach

The Department of Game, Fish and Parks used the best information available to draft a framework for Department specialists and others to address species and habitats that need special attention to help prevent future endangered species

*"This Plan is a voluntary guidance document with an emphasis on conserving biological diversity in South Dakota through partnerships and cooperation...To be successful in avoiding future endangered species conflicts and jeopardizing unique habitats, we must engage private landowners, tribes, environmental and agricultural organizations, government entities ranging from local to federal agencies, as well as the more than 90% of our citizens who believe in the importance of wildlife to our quality of life and to our economy."*

*- John Cooper, Secretary of South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*

listings. The key to healthy people and healthy wildlife is habitat - clean air and water, healthy and diverse landscapes, and other features that help fish and wildlife thrive.



Long Billed Curlew/Kent (KC) Jensen, South Dakota State University

South Dakota's plan emphasizes habitat that will benefit all wildlife in the state, while addressing the needs of 90 animal species of conservation concern. The plan attempts to identify and locate South Dakota's essential habitats, identify the habitats that have changed since the state was settled, determine which animal species need special attention to ensure

their long-term survival, and develop ways for the state to be more proactive in wildlife and habitat management.

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in South Dakota

South Dakota's Wildlife Action Plan identified several key challenges to wildlife and habitats. Land has been converted for other uses throughout the state. Some fish and wildlife species have general habitat needs and can adapt to such changes. Others have specific requirements, and those species have suffered from loss or degradation of habitat and impacts from the decline of traditional impacts, such as fire or grazing, which help to keep certain habitats healthy. For example, tallgrass prairie benefits greatly from fire. Species that are not native to the state have been intentionally or accidentally introduced, often with disastrous consequences. Sylvatic plague was recently found in black-tailed prairie dog colonies, and black-footed ferrets in southwestern South Dakota are being closely watched for the impacts of this exotic disease. The Missouri River dams changed it from a diverse, meandering river to a series of reservoirs, jeopardizing the future of such species as the pallid sturgeon, piping plover, and interior least tern.

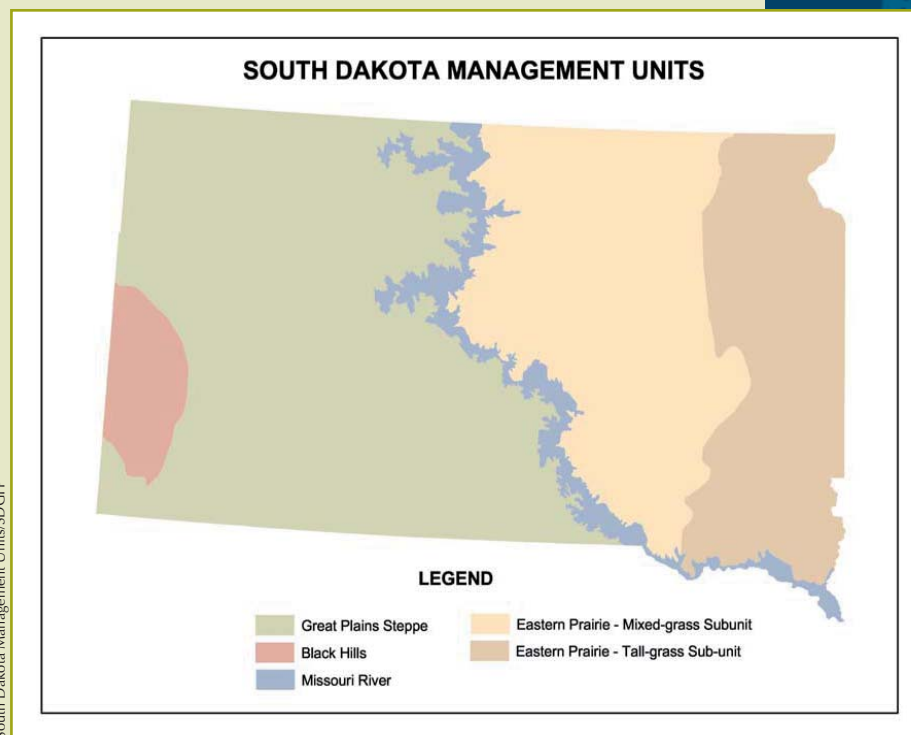
Wildlife	Total number of species	Species of Conservation Concern*	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels	34	7	2
Snails	~100	4	0
Crayfish	3	0	0
Insects	6,000-7,000	9	2
Fish	108	20	10
Amphibians	15	2	0
Reptiles	32	10	3
Birds	439	28	8
Mammals	97	10	5
<b>Totals</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>30</b>

\*Criteria: 1. State and or federal listed species, 2) species for which South Dakota represents a significant portion of the species' overall range, and 3) species that are indicative of or depend upon a declining or unique habitat in South Dakota.

### Wildlife highlights

Key Habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<b>Prairie rivers of western South Dakota</b>  <b>Ownership: mixture of tribal, private, federal and state</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trumpeter swan</li> <li>• Black tern</li> <li>• Pearl dace</li> <li>• Northern river otter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor water quality and siltation</li> <li>• Conversion and loss of adjacent stream vegetation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue gathering information on species that depend on this habitat and encourage NRCS, USFWS, and SDGFP private lands programs to enroll riparian lands in land protection and enhancement programs</li> <li>• Share information with land managers and the public about the importance of intact blocks of native grassland.</li> </ul>
<b>Black Hills forests</b>  <b>Ownership: primarily national forest, with intermingled lands of various ownerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooper's rocky mountainsnail</li> <li>• Fringe-tailed myotis</li> <li>• Black-backed woodpecker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on pine production at the expense of more diverse habitats</li> <li>• Suppression of natural fires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with private and public landowners and foresters to promote diverse forest types, including the maintenance of snags</li> <li>• Promote prescribed burning where feasible and conduct evaluations of wildlife response to prescribed and natural fires</li> </ul>
<b>Tallgrass prairie</b>  <b>Ownership: tribal, private, state, and federal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dakota skipper</li> <li>• Franklin's ground squirrel,</li> <li>• Ferruginous hawk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invasion of exotic species, such as leafy spurge and smooth brome</li> <li>• Lack of fire, a critical historical disturbance factor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue or expand efforts to control exotic and invasive plant species, targeting remaining blocks of tallgrass prairie</li> <li>• Evaluate SDGFP lands for opportunities to use fire and grazing as tools to simulate the historical disturbance factors that created and maintained this habitat</li> </ul>

**Recommended actions to conserve South Dakota's wildlife**



South Dakota Management Units/SDGFP

## Working together for South Dakota's wildlife

From start to finish, South Dakota incorporated public involvement as part of the planning process. Forty-eight invitations to join the Advisory Team were extended to universities, government entities, and tribes. Other opportunities included an interactive website, an open invitation for anyone to join the Advisory Team, regional town meetings held in 4 of the state's largest cities to gain insight on problems and strategies early in the planning process, presentations to the SDGFP Commission and staff, and specific invitations to universities, tribes, and other government entities to meet early in the

process in order to incorporate mutually-beneficial strategies and philosophies, which resulted in 7 specific meetings. There was also a 30-day public comment period on the draft plan and an opportunity for participation in the "Wildlife Values in the West 2004" survey to help the state understand how South Dakotans may react to the wildlife policies that will be used to implement South Dakota's Wildlife Action Plan.

*"The document provides an impressive synthesis of South Dakota's knowledge of wildlife and habitat. In addition, the plan includes a fairly extensive presentation of public input into the plan."*

-Jeff Lerner, Director of Conservation Planning, Defenders of Wildlife



Black Hills South Dakota/Dave Ode

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Comp\\_Plan.htm](http://www.sdgfp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/Comp_Plan.htm)