

# Michigan 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 identify actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

## Michigan snapshot

**Landscape:** Water dominates Michigan's landscape—from the surrounding Great Lakes to 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 miles of rivers and streams, and more freshwater shorelines than any other state in the nation.

Forests cover much of the undeveloped land in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula, while grasslands and other open lands are more common in southern Michigan. Urban sprawl and high rates of residential and commercial development are a concern throughout the state.

**Stewardship:** Michigan has more public land than any state east of the Mississippi River. Federal, state, or local governments manage one-fifth of the land area, including the country's largest state forest system.

Hundreds of conservation partners, including other public agencies, local governments, tribes, watershed groups, nature centers, land conservancies, corporations, special interest groups, and



Erecting osprey towers/Michigan DNR

dedicated individuals, are also working for the conservation of Michigan's native wildlife and their habitats on publicly- and privately-owned lands.



Karner Blue Butterfly/Jennifer Fetting, Michigan DNR

**Wildlife highlights:** Karner blue butterflies lend brilliant color to the prairies and savannas of southern Michigan. Lake sturgeon grace Michigan's waters, which also provide a backdrop for the unexpected beauty of more than 40 species of native mussels.

Each year, Kirtland's Warblers faithfully return to the only nesting area they've ever known – in northern Michigan's jack pine forests.

*“The Michigan Wildlife Action Plan is a major step in the journey to preserve our outdoor heritage...Our outdoor heritage depends on our willingness to act to reduce or remove the threats to our state's wildlife diversity. I encourage every one of our state's citizens to become involved in this effort. Our state, our sense of place, and the future of our wildlife species depend on our response.”*  
– Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm

## Michigan's planning approach

Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan provides a common strategic framework and information resource to help conserve Michigan's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and the lands and waters on which they depend for survival. The action plan takes a primarily habitat-based approach to conserving rare, declining, and common wildlife species. The action plan focuses on 'landscape features,' such as prairies, bogs, large rivers, and coastal dunes. Recommended conservation actions are provided for these landscape features on a regional basis. The action plan also looks at the conservation needs of more than 400 vulnerable wildlife species and at state-wide conservation priorities.



Sturgeon /Michigan DNR

*"If we invest in conserving wildlife now, we can protect species for future generations. A proactive plan will benefit the health of wildlife and people, and conserve wildlife before they become rarer and more costly to protect."*

*—Rebecca Humphries,  
Director,  
Michigan Department of  
Natural Resources*

By combining habitat and wildlife-specific approaches, and considering multiple scales, Michigan's action plan will help to guide the conservation of the state's full wildlife diversity.

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Michigan

Michigan's action plan identifies 20 statewide priority threats and significant conservation issues. *Invasive species* and *habitat fragmentation* repeatedly surface as highest priority threats.

**Invasive species** are non-native plants and animals that cause ecological and economic harm. The Great Lakes region alone hosts more than 200, including plants like purple loosestrife and autumn olive, and animals such as the gypsy moth and zebra mussel. The emerald ash borer, a native of eastern Asia, arrived in Michigan less than a decade ago and has



Frog/Dave Kenyon, Michigan DNR

Wildlife	Total number of species	Species in need of conservation*	Threatened/endangered listed species
Mussels & Clams	77	28	10
Snails	180	36	4
Crayfish	6	2	0
Insects	15,000–20,000	138	19
Fish	152	44	15
Amphibians	23	14	2
Reptiles	29	16	4
Birds	414**	99	21
Mammals	66	27	6
<b>Totals</b>		<b>404</b>	<b>81</b>

\* Each state is using its own criteria for this category. Michigan focuses on wildlife species with small or declining populations or other characteristics that may make them vulnerable (this includes legally recognized threatened/endangered species)

\*\* Includes 233 species known to breed in Michigan, as well as migratory birds.

## Wildlife highlights

Highlight habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<b>Prairie</b>  <b>Ownership:</b> <b>Mix of private/  public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barrens locust</li> <li>• Fowler's toad</li> <li>• Eastern meadowlark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat Fragmentation</li> <li>• Altered natural fire cycles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect grasslands of at least 250 acres to benefit wildlife that depend on large open areas.</li> <li>• Use mowing, grazing, and prescribed burning to restore lands that benefit from disturbance.</li> </ul>
<b>Bog</b>  <b>Ownership:</b> <b>Mix of private/  public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tapered vertigo (snail)</li> <li>• Ringed boghunter (dragonfly)</li> <li>• Snowshoe hare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unplanned housing &amp; business development</li> <li>• Invasive plants and animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with municipalities to promote planning and zoning that protects bogs on privately-owned lands.</li> <li>• Remove invasive plants and animals and prevent new introductions.</li> </ul>
<b>Great Lakes Nearshore</b>  <b>Ownership:</b> <b>Public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake sturgeon</li> <li>• Channel darter</li> <li>• Mudpuppy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invasive plants and animals</li> <li>• Dredging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help stop the spread of invasive species and disease by improving ship ballast control practices.</li> <li>• Continue to work on limiting dredging to time periods that will avoid harming aquatic species during their breeding seasons.</li> </ul>

### Recommended actions to conserve Michigan's wildlife

Zebra Mussels/Michigan DNR



Zebra Mussels/Michigan DNR

*“This is a marvelous piece of work...Its quality, clarity and depth were clear to me after the first page of the executive summary and it did not let up.”*

*–Dave Borgeson,  
Policy Advisor,  
Michigan United  
Conservation Clubs*

already destroyed millions of the state’s ash trees.

**Habitat fragmentation** results from breaking up larger landscapes into smaller patches. Housing development, new roads, stream diversions, and dams can isolate animal populations, create barriers to wildlife movement, and lead to wildlife declines. Fragmentation can be especially harmful to migratory aquatic wildlife such as lake sturgeon, and animals that need large habitats, including songbirds like scarlet tanagers and meadowlarks, and mammals like the American marten.

## Working together for Michigan’s wildlife

Michigan Department of Natural Resources invited more than 200 conservation partners to help shape the action plan and nearly 60% actively participated—including the American Fisheries Society, DTE Energy, The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Bow Hunters Association, Michigan Farm Bureau, and the Notawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi. The 12 public meetings and 8 additional partner meetings included regional technical workshops that brought together

natural resource professionals from conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, and universities to examine the conditions and threats facing each landscape feature and to recommend conservation actions.

Michigan’s action plan identifies a wide variety of needed conservation efforts,

making it a valuable resource for all conservation partners in Michigan. Each conservation partner, whether government, tribe, organization or individual, will determine for itself which actions are most appropriate to help fulfill its mission and goals. Some of these decisions have already been made; that is, many of the recommended conservation efforts in the



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action plan were drawn from existing strategies and plans, and implementation is already progressing. In many ways, Michigan’s conservation partners have already started on the path toward ensuring representation of the full diversity of Michigan’s wildlife species and their habitats. Success will require continued coordination, cooperation and a common vision for the conservation of natural resources in Michigan.

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