

# Indiana Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy

## What is a wildlife action plan?

Congress asked each state to develop a wildlife action plan, known technically as a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (or CWS). 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.

## Indiana snapshot

**Landscape:** Indiana stretches from the sandy dunes of Lake Michigan to steep wooded ravines and bluffs along the Ohio River. The Wabash River bisects the state and defines the state's southwestern border, flowing through fertile prairies, fields and forest.

**Management:** Since most of Indiana's land and water resources are privately owned, wildlife conservation in Indiana must be a joint effort between public agencies and private land managers.

**Wildlife:** Recovering populations of otters, bald eagles and nesting osprey once again inhabit Indiana's streams, rivers and lakes.

## Indiana's planning approach

As habitat loss is the biggest threat to Indiana wildlife, The Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife considered a habitat-based approach to wildlife conservation the most efficient way to address the needs of the widest variety of species. Though previous Division strategic plans have indicated the need to improve habitats,

they had not identified a "good way to get there." A habitat-based approach also avoided the polarization among interest groups that can accompany single species conservation efforts.



Veterinarian checking an Osprey/Indiana

Traditional Federal Aid funding and even Endangered Species funding tends to limit the areas and types of habitat-associated activities that qualify for grants. The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grant legislation (which initiated the CWS process) make funds available for habitat work.

Indiana's CWS provides a comprehensive overview of conservation in Indiana and identifies needs and opportunities for helping to prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered in the future.

*"We believe in Hoosier ingenuity and look forward to working with all our partners in this historic effort to ensure the future of our critical wildlife resources and the habitats on which they—and we—depend."*

*— Kyle Hupfer, Director,  
Indiana Department of  
Natural Resources*

“The Strategy” also includes information on the conservation organizations currently working to address specific conservation needs and areas where interests overlap, creating the potential for partnerships.



Lake sturgeon/Indiana

### Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Indiana

Wildlife experts, surveyed via a detailed questionnaire, identified protection of large blocks of habitat—required by species with extensive home ranges and species dependent on large, undisturbed areas—a key challenge in conserving Indiana’s wildlife. Finding successful ways to engage private landholders also emerged as a significant challenge.

Wildlife conservation challenges also include development, land use

changes, competition, contamination and climate change. Experts strongly supported protecting migration routes and managing populations of common species as methods for conserving wildlife populations.

### Working together for Indiana’s wildlife

While developing Indiana’s strategy, the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife focused most of its resources on communicating with potential partners with vested interests in the plan.



Cave salamander/Indiana

Wildlife	Total Number of Species of Greatest Conservation Need*	State Special Concern	State Endangered	Federal Threatened or Endangered or Candidate **
Mammals	22	15	7	2
Birds	40	12	28	5
Reptiles	18	2	16	2
Amphibians	10	5	5	
Fish	25	15	10	
Mussels	24	9	15	12
Snails	2	2		
Crayfish	2	1	1	
Other arthropods and invertebrates	129	48	81	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>24</b>

\* Indiana’s Species of Greatest Conservation need (SGCN) were identified using the published list of federally threatened, endangered (T&E) or candidate species and Indiana’s list of endangered species and species of special concern.

\*\*All extant species native to Indiana that are federal candidates or listed species are also on the state endangered species list.

### Wildlife Highlights

Highlight habitats	Wildlife (examples)	Issue (examples)	Action (examples)
<b>Wetlands</b>	Crayfish frog Common moorhen King rail Least bittern Upland sandpiper	Loss of wetlands habitat	Purchase Goose Pond, an 8,000-acre wetland complex in southwestern Indiana. Purchase was accomplished by a large coalition of conservation partners.
<b>Savanna</b>	Ornate box turtle Plains pocket gopher Rough green snake Eastern spadefoot toad Henslow's sparrow	Invasive exotics, habitat loss and degradation	Habitat management activities such as removal of invasive exotic species are conducted on over 10,000 acres of savannas in public and private ownership.
<b>Water bodies statewide</b>	Osprey	Population decline resulting in state-endangered status.	Restore ospreys by obtaining six-week-old chicks from eastern states and releasing approximately eight chicks a year at each of four release sites throughout Indiana for three years.

### Recommended actions to conserve Indiana's wildlife



Osprey Pat Hack/Indiana



Osprey nestling/Indiana

Many partners communicate directly with community members that share an interest in conservation. Organizations distributed solicitations for public comment via their newsletters, websites, listservs and meetings.

To reach community members with no active interest in conservation, the Division distributed a news release through the Wild Bulletin, soliciting public input on the final draft version of the Strategy.

Wild Bulletin reaches more than 10,000 recipients, including most media outlets in the state. A presentation at the annual meeting of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers organization led to publication of several newspaper articles about the Strategy around the state.

The Division developed a database of all partners able and willing to communicate about the plan, and will continue to utilize these communication channels to involve the public in implementing and revising The Strategy.



Franklin Ground Squirrel/Indiana



Franklin Ground Squirrel in trap/Indiana

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