

# Colorado Wildlife Action Plan

## From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

Colorado's wildlife action plan reviews priority species and 41 landscape types to identify the highest conservation priorities for species and habitat conservation, restoration, enhancement, and research. Given an expected increase in the state's population of more than 50% over the coming 25 years, the primary challenges to Colorado's wildlife are the conversion and fragmentation of habitat, human use and depletion of natural resources, pollution, introduction of invasive and exotic species, and alteration of ecological processes.

### *Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas*

#### **The Rio Grande Initiative**

Colorado's wildlife action plan identifies the Rio Grande River as important habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and for rare fish such as the Rio Grande cutthroat trout and Rio Grande chub. As Colorado grows, this valuable habitat and open space is under pressure from the subdivision of farms and ranches into vacation properties. Through a proactive State Wildlife Grant of just \$16,000, the Colorado Division of Wildlife helped the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

complete a strategic mapping project which later attracted \$7.4 million in state lottery funds, the largest award to a private conservation organization. The plan developed through The Rio Grande Initiative includes information that will help focus the habitat conservation efforts of more than 25 partners, including federal, state and local agencies, county governments, and conservation organizations. Ultimately, the Rio Grande Headwaters Trust aims to protect 27,000 acres or nearly half of the large parcels of private lands in the river corridor, conserving the wildlife and natural places that are so important to our family traditions.

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A Rio Grande wetland/Rio de la Vista

## *Gathering Information to Take Action* **Conserving the Olive-backed Pocket Mouse**

The olive-backed pocket mouse is a Tier 1 species in Colorado's wildlife action plan because it could be imperiled by rapid development of its natural habitat, but little is known about the species in the state. To address this significant shortfall in information, the Colorado Division of Wildlife directed \$26,000 in State Wildlife Grants Program funds toward a project, led by a University of Northern Colorado researcher, to determine the olive-backed pocket mouse's range and population trends in Colorado. The vital information provided by this study will help the Colorado Division of Wildlife and its partners take proactive actions to conserve the olive-backed pocket mouse before it declines to a level that might require costly protections under the Endangered Species Act. This proactive effort is just one way Colorado's wildlife action plan will help this growing state conserve wildlife and the places they live for future generations.



Olive-backed pocket mouse/  
Adam Messer, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

## *Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People* **Collaborating for Gunnison Sage-grouse Conservation**

The survival of the Gunnison sage-grouse, a Tier 1 species in Colorado's wildlife action plan, largely depends on its fate in the Gunnison Basin, home to three-quarters of its population. Numerous State Wildlife Grants-funded projects are completing priority conservation actions outlined in the wildlife action plan. Colorado Audubon has created a citizen volunteer corps to monitor habitat

conditions in the Gunnison Basin and to improve habitat on other public and private lands. Colorado State University will create a habitat guide to help private and public land managers adapt their grazing and land management practices to benefit sage grouse. Conservation easements now protect nearly 4,000 acres of high quality sage grouse habitat. These cooperative actions involving the public, private conservation groups, sportsmen, landowners and federal land managers will help the Gunnison sage-grouse survive on a working landscape, without the costly disruptions that would come with an endangered species listing.

## **Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies**

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Gunnison sage-grouse/Colorado Division of Wildlife

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