

Illinois Wildlife Action Plan

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

Illinois' wildlife action plan gives an overview of the major habitat types in the state, their current condition, challenges to their integrity, and actions to conserve them. The 15 ecological regions of Illinois focus on key natural communities and wildlife, places with special importance for conserving wildlife, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Illinois' wildlife action plan outlines seven campaigns: Farmland and Prairies, Forests, Wetlands, Streams, Invasive Species, Land and Water Stewardship, and Green Cities.

Protecting Imperiled Land, Water and Wildlife

Restoring Water and Wildlife to Hennepin and Hopper Lakes

Wetland conservation is one of seven campaigns in Illinois' wildlife action plan. For 150 years, Hennepin and Hopper Lakes' water was pumped out, farmers grew crops on the land, and waterbirds were nowhere to be seen. To restore these once-vibrant wetlands, The Wetland Initiative acquired the land in 2001 and immediately turned

off the pumps. Within weeks, the water and the birds were back. By fall, water flowed over nearly 1,000 acres. Native plants reappeared, including the state-endangered yellow monkey-flower that has not been seen in the area for at least two decades. Today more than 235 bird species can be seen, including the state-threatened pied-billed grebe, bald eagle, and black tern. Projects like this are cost-effective ways to improve water quality, increase habitat and wildlife diversity, reduce flood peaks and flood damages, and create opportunities for recreation and economic development.

Thanks to a wetland restoration project on Hennepin and Hopper Lakes, more than 235 bird species can be seen today, including the state-threatened pied-billed grebe, bald eagle, and black tern.



Hennepin and Hopper corn field before restoration/
Gary Sullivan, The Wetlands Initiative



Hennepin and Hopper Lakes after restoration/Gary Sullivan, The Wetlands Initiative

Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas **Conserving Grassland Wildlife**

Illinois' wildlife action plan lays out many priorities for grassland wildlife in its "Farmland and Prairie" campaign. The lack of high quality grassland habitat has led to declining levels of many grassland wildlife populations. To carry out grassland conservation actions, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has partnered with The Nature Conservancy, Illinois Audubon Society, Quail Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, and University of Illinois – Champaign/Urbana. Over the next 25 years, this initiative will establish 50,000 acres of additional grassland, improve 100,000 acres of existing grassland, and restore or create 2,500 acres of wetlands in grassland. Wildlife to benefit include greater prairie chicken, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, and state endangered upland sandpipers. These collaborative efforts will conserve grassland wildlife and their vital habitat for future generations.



Grassland habitat/Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources

and Wildlife Service launched Illinois' first project through the National Fish Passage Program. Two fish passages were constructed that reconnect 70 miles of stream habitat, providing healthier habitat for fish and mussels. Since installation, 12 different fish species have used the passages to bypass the dams and expand into more habitat. These restoration methods will serve as models for future efforts to restore fragmented stream habitat. Such proactive efforts to conserve fish and their stream habitat protect our clean water, benefiting both wildlife and people.

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

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Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People

Restoring Fish Passages on Big Rock Creek

Stream restoration and conservation are high priorities in Illinois' wildlife action plan. Two dams on Big Rock Creek block fish movement. Species affected include greater redhorse, channel catfish, mottled sculpin, and several migratory sucker fish. To help these priority fish without removing the dams, U.S. Fish

Two fish passages were constructed that reconnect 70 miles of stream habitat, providing healthier habitat for fish and mussels.



Migratory shorthead redhorse spawning in Big Rock Creek/Stephen M. Pescitelli, Illinois Department of Natural Resources