

# Michigan Wildlife Action Plan

## From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

The Michigan Wildlife Action Plan takes a primarily habitat-based approach to conserving wildlife, focusing on “landscape features,” such as prairies, bogs, large rivers, and coastal dunes. The plan recommends conservation actions on a regional basis. Invasive species and habitat fragmentation are identified within the plan as the highest priority threats to wildlife and landscape features in both aquatic and terrestrial systems throughout Michigan. The wildlife action plan looks at the needs of more than 400 vulnerable wildlife species and identifies several priority threats and issues that need to be addressed to prevent the state’s wildlife from declining.

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

#### **Helping Private Landowners Conserve Wildlife Habitat**

Creating conservation partnerships with private landowners is a high priority in Michigan’s wildlife action plan since 79% of Michigan is privately-owned and more than 75% of the state’s endangered and threatened species are found on private land. Michigan’s Landowner Incentive Program provides financial and technical

assistance to private landowners to help restore habitat for wildlife. In the first four years, the program focused on 3 priority regions: southern Michigan prairies, savannahs, and wetlands; northern Lower Peninsula jack pines barrens; and moist conifers in the Upper Peninsula. During this period the program funded 374 projects on 15,017 acres and provided technical assistance to 543 landowners on 48,320 acres. Prescribed fires, mechanical shrub removal, invasive plant removal, prairie planting, wetland restoration, and tree plantings benefit 91 vulnerable

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Prescribed burn on private land in Northern Lower Peninsula/Brian Piccolo, Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Prairie at Algonac State Park/Raymond Rustem, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

wildlife species. These actions also benefit more common species that use the same resources, helping to conserve them before they become rare and more costly to protect.

### ***Gathering Information to Take Action*** **Conserving Important Grassland Bird Sites**

Many grasslands birds are identified as species of greatest conservation need in Michigan's wildlife action plan, due to their marked declines in recent decades. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory helped identify sites in Michigan that are critical for the continued protection of grassland birds. More than 14,500 birds were observed at nearly 900 sites throughout Michigan. This research helps biologists understand distributions and habitat needs for birds like the bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, and Henslow's sparrow. These results will identify the best sites for conservation of Michigan's grassland birds and increase the effectiveness of conservation practices so that future generations can enjoy these species.

### ***Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People*** **Involving the Public in Conservation**

Michigan's wildlife action plan identifies as priority actions the need to educate the public about conservation threats and to improve social attitudes toward wildlife and habitats. Michigan's Conservation Stewards Program strives to address these issues by delivering high quality, locally-based training to

create an informed citizenry who will practice community-based volunteer conservation activities. Thus far, nearly 100 Conservation Stewards have been certified and have already contributed over 3,800 hours of volunteer service worth more than \$70,000. Assessments of participants indicate improvements in their ecological knowledge and their connection to the land, which greatly benefits the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in its efforts to conserve wildlife and vital natural areas for future generations.

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

444 North Capitol St, NW  
Suite 725  
Washington, DC 20001  
202.624.7890  
[www.teaming.com](http://www.teaming.com)  
[www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org)

### **Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife**

P.O. Box 30444  
Lansing, MI 48909  
[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370\\_30909---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_30909---,00.html)

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Conservation Stewards learning about water quality sampling/Michigan State University Extension