

Mississippi Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

Expert surveys and data from the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program led to the identification of 297 species of greatest conservation need and their habitats in Mississippi's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Sixty-four habitat types were grouped into inland terrestrial, flowing water, standing water, and marine categories. Habitats were prioritized according to the number of species of greatest conservation need found in each and by the degree of imperilment of these species. Mississippi's strategy represents a habitat-based approach to conserve rare, declining, and common species.

Protecting Imperiled Land, Water, and Wildlife

Conserving Mississippi's Alligator Gar

Mississippi's comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy has prioritized learning more about the alligator gar, a large fish which grows up to thirteen feet and weighs hundreds of pounds. Once abundant in southern Mississippi, the alligator gar population has dwindled

over the last century, making the alligator gar extremely rare in the Mississippi Delta and possibly along the Gulf Coast. State Wildlife Grants are now helping to provide baseline status information on coastal alligator gar. Such information is essential to make effective management decisions. By gathering this information now, proactive conservation measures can be put in place to conserve the alligator gar for future generations.

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Alligator gar/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Rafinesque's big-eared bat/Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas **Creating Habitat for Bats**

Bats help people by eating insects and pollinating plants. Out of the 14 bat species found in Mississippi, two are endangered and seven more are species of greatest conservation need in Mississippi's conservation strategy. Loss of habitat has not only affected the places where bats find food but it has also significantly limited the shelters where they rest. The objective of a State Wildlife Grants project is to study habitat for bats and evaluate the feasibility of enhancing bat populations by providing artificial shelters for them to rest. This will prevent the listing of even more bat species as endangered, saving taxpayer money by avoiding paperwork and costly litigation.

Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People **Preventing Damage by Invasive Species**

Plants and animals that do not naturally occur in an area can be extremely disruptive to the natural balance of an ecosystem. Controlling these non-native

species, especially in aquatic ecosystems, is a high priority in Mississippi's conservation strategy. Tilapia is a freshwater fish that has been introduced to Mississippi's waters and has been identified as a potentially serious threat. A State Wildlife Grants-funded project is looking at the seasonal movement of tilapia and how they were introduced to Mississippi. Such information is vital to develop a proactive plan for controlling the spread of this invasive fish.

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Tilapia/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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