

North Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

The North Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is a habitat-based approach to conserving all types of fish and wildlife including rare, declining, common, nongame and game species. Twenty-one focus areas represent unique natural community types rare to North Dakota and habitats especially crucial to species of conservation priority. The key to ensuring long-term survival of these resources in North Dakota is to maintain diverse grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and streams.

Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People

Removing Invasive Trees in Grassland, Wetland and Riparian Habitats

Restoring habitat is a key priority in the North Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Russian olive is a non-native tree known for invading riparian areas, grasslands, and wetlands, where it crowds out cottonwoods and willows and reduces the number of grassland-dependent birds – including eight priority species. To enhance habitat for these and other wildlife species, and to restore riparian and grassland habitat to a more natural state, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department is removing Russian olive and other unwanted woody vegetation from key wildlife management areas. Such proactive efforts will benefit the birds and other wildlife that depend upon these areas, conserving them before they become rare and more costly to protect.



Russian olive removal/North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas

Conserving Rare Mammals in North Dakota

The North Dakota conservation strategy recommends filling data gaps to establish baseline information on little-known animals. Hunted and trapped nearly to extinction in the 1900s, river otters are thought to be re-colonizing portions of North Dakota, yet no formal research had been conducted to evaluate otters and other rare mammals like the fisher and Eastern spotted skunk. Since 2006, researchers from Frostburg State University have worked closely with state, federal, local agencies and landowners and have found otters throughout much of eastern North Dakota. Although fishers and spotted skunks were rarely seen, researchers discovered another mammal long thought gone – the American marten, which seems to be established throughout the Turtle Mountains. This information will help better manage these rare species so they do not become endangered.

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Gathering Information to Take Action **Studying the Long-billed Curlew in Southwestern North Dakota**

The North Dakota conservation strategy places a high priority on the long-billed curlew because of its declining numbers. The long-billed curlew is the largest shorebird in North America with a distinctive 8-inch, down-curved bill. The curlew was once found throughout the Great Plains; however, human influences on the landscape are destroying its habitat and shrinking its range. Understanding its population size and distribution is critically important to conservationists, managers and biologists concerned with widespread alteration and loss of its habitat. Recent surveys revealed that a small population exists in the southwestern part of the state. Survey routes have been designated so biologists can monitor the curlew over the long-term. Information from this research will provide cost effective monitoring recommendations to help conserve this graceful bird for future generations of North Dakotans.

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Long-billed curlew/North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Understanding the population size and distribution of the long-billed curlew is critically important to conservationists, managers and biologists concerned with widespread alteration and loss of its habitat.



American marten/Frostburg State University