

West Virginia Wildlife Conservation Action Plan

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

Key features of the West Virginia Wildlife Conservation Action Plan are its emphasis on conservation actions, including a land conservation initiative, and a collaborative approach to plan implementation. The action plan is both species- and habitat-based, its core component being the 128 species and species group fact sheets that will function as mini-plans within the broader comprehensive plan. Although the plan covers a ten-year span, it is actually only the first step in a continuous, adaptive management process for collaborative conservation of the state's fish and wildlife resources and the habitats that sustain them.

Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People

Restoring West Virginia Freshwater Mussels

The health of wildlife is often an early indicator of disease and pollution that affect us all. Restoring freshwater mussels is an important conservation action in West Virginia's wildlife action plan. West Virginia waters support as many as 69 mussel species, six of which are endangered. Freshwater mussels

are important indicators of water quality since they are very sensitive to pollution. Through restoration efforts, nearly 8,000 mussels were rescued from areas threatened by development and relocated. Over 38,000 mussels of three species were raised and released in degraded habitats. To ensure the mussels' long-term conservation, seven long-term stations were established on five rivers. By conserving freshwater mussels, West Virginia protects clean waters that also provide drinking water and recreational opportunities for people.

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Freshwater mussels/Craig Stihler, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources



Surveying cave wildlife/Jeff Hajenga, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Gathering Information to Take Action Finding Biologically Diverse Caves

Conservation of caves and their wildlife are priorities in West Virginia's conservation action plan. In addition to regular bat and woodrat monitoring the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources worked with the Karst Waters Institute to survey the wildlife living in West Virginia's caves. More than 80 different species of cave invertebrates were documented in 282 caves. In addition, 29 new cave species have been discovered so far. Caves in Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties host particularly rich wildlife diversity. This effort culminated with the publication of The Invertebrate Cave Fauna of West Virginia, Second Edition. Maintaining diverse, healthy wildlife populations means cleaner and healthier natural places overall, benefiting people as well as wildlife.

Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas Monitoring Stream Fish Health

Managing and conserving state waters and their associated wildlife are important strategies in West Virginia's conservation action plan.

Launched in 2004, the Stream Classification survey documents the distribution and health of the state's 188 fish species. Working with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Canaan Valley Institute, the Wildlife Resources Section samples approximately 60 streams annually. In addition, three long-term water quality and fish monitoring sites were established on Patterson Creek, Cacapon River, and Back Creek. These proactive efforts will provide early warning of species declines, allowing for proactive conservation actions that will help avoid endangered species listings.

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

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Stream monitoring/Dan Cincotta, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

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