

# Kansas Wildlife Action Plan

## What is a wildlife action plan?

Congress asked each state to develop a wildlife action plan, known technically as a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy. These proactive plans examine the health of wildlife and prescribe actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

## Kansas snapshot

**Geography:** From the woodlands and tall grass prairies of its eastern region to the shortgrass prairies of its western High Plains, Kansas is home to a diverse array of landscapes and habitats.

**Landscape:** Since more than 97 percent of Kansas' 82,000 square miles is in the hands of private owners, effective public/private partnerships are crucial to conserving the state's rich wildlife legacy.

**Wildlife:** Wetlands, such as the internationally acclaimed Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, host a vast array of migratory and resident bird species, making Kansas a must-see birding destination.

## Kansas' planning approach

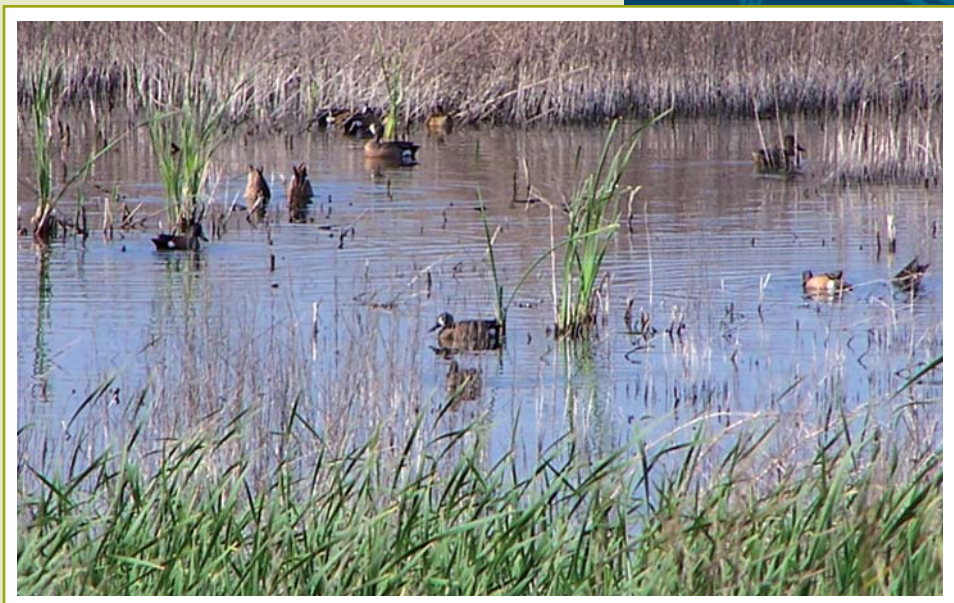
Kansas approached this plan as a Strategic Planning effort, and worked to compile the best information available for assembly into this plan, entitled "A Future for Kansas Wildlife." Species lists were compiled, and evaluated according to 6 criteria for qualification as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The resulting 316 species were then verified and ranked through use of a questionnaire sent both in-house and to known experts throughout the state. Species were also associated with habitats within

three Conservation Regions through the same process. Issues and strategies were then compiled for the top-ranked habitats within Conservation Regions, starting with those listed in the Kansas Wildlife Diversity Plan. Issues were prioritized.

## Primary challenges to conserving wildlife in Kansas

From the many perspectives we listened to concerning the future of Kansas' fish and wildlife, certain themes emerged over and over. Although details and specifics for species, habitat types and conservation regions are listed in the Plan, they can be broadly stated as: a) existing data gaps impede effective conservation planning and implementation; b) land management practices have changed the

*"A Future for Kansas Wildlife" action plan is a major cooperative approach in solving long-term conservation challenges for our outdoor heritage. It's essential to implement strategies like these to maintain our excellent Kansas quality of life. I encourage every Kansan to be a part of this proactive effort."*  
– Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius



Blue-winged teal/Ken Brunson

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changed the structure of habitats over large areas; c) fragmentation and conversion of habitat is occurring; d) invasive exotic plants and animals are a problem; e) natural resource management may affect habitat conditions; and f) inadequate coordination between government agencies who may have conflicting goals for resource management.



Swift Foxes/Mike Blair

## Working together for Kansas' wildlife

Stakeholders were identified through existing Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) constituent and mailing lists. A statewide news

release, and 175 letters from the Secretary announced the initiation of the planning process, inviting participation from any interested parties. Reports were made at all KDWP Commission meetings (5) between the initiation of the process, and the completion of the final draft. Because these meetings are open to the public, the agenda and outcomes are included in press releases, giving the public notice and the opportunity to participate.

A questionnaire was developed to confirm the selection of SGCN, to rank

*“This action plan is a well thought-out process for benefiting the health of the wildlife and people of Kansas. It will ensure quality outdoor experiences for generations to come. If we invest in conserving wildlife now, we can protect species for future generations and keep them off endangered species lists.”*

– Mike Hayden, Former Governor and current Secretary of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

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| Wildlife           | Total number of species | Species in need of conservation* | Threatened/endangered listed species |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Mussels            | 53                      | 43                               | 11                                   |
| Snails             | 18                      | 3                                | 2                                    |
| Crayfish & Isopods | 23                      | 14                               | 0                                    |
| Planarian          | 1                       | 1                                | 0                                    |
| Insects            | 611 named               | 25                               | 2                                    |
| Fish               | 127                     | 67                               | 16                                   |
| Amphibians         | 31                      | 17                               | 10                                   |
| Reptiles/Turtles   | 54/15                   | 22/3                             | 6/1                                  |
| Birds              | 467                     | 100                              | 8                                    |
| Mammals            | 89                      | 21                               | 3                                    |
| <b>Totals</b>      | <b>1488</b>             | <b>316</b>                       | <b>59</b>                            |

### Wildlife highlights

| Highlight habitats  | Wildlife (examples)   | Issue (examples)  | Action (examples)   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Tallgrass prairie</b><br><br><b>Ownership:</b><br>Mostly private, some federal, some state | Greater prairie chicken, Spotted skunk, Crawfish, frog                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land management: annual burning.</li> <li>Wind farm placement.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote research on economic impacts of rotational burning and implement best practices.</li> <li>Work with other state agencies to avoid, minimize, reduce and mitigate impacts to habitat.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Shortgrass prairie</b><br><br><b>Ownership:</b><br>Nearly all private                      | Ferruginous hawk, Black-tailed prairie dog, Lesser prairie chicken, Mountain plover,  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The intensification of agriculture, particularly grazing, cotton production, and the practice of wheat stubble burning, is having major impacts on the heterogeneity of the shortgrass prairie habitat.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a broad scale education approach and outreach efforts. These programs would be designed to effectively communicate with various publics: landowners, managers, local governments, agricultural industries, and the general public.</li> <li>Develop cost-neutral/positive conservation practices for producers to provide for maintenance of viable farming/ranching operations.</li> <li>Develop additional positive conservation incentives for landowners.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Mixed prairie</b><br><br><b>Ownership:</b><br>Nearly all private                           | Ferruginous hawk, Black-tailed prairie dog, Lesser prairie chicken, Loggerhead shrike | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The conversion and fragmentation of land is having a negative impact on the flora and fauna of the mixed prairie.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform and promote, with landowners and managers, the benefits and proper use of fire to manage habitat.</li> <li>Assess habitat fragmentation and its implications to natural communities through GAP analysis.</li> </ul>  |

**Recommended actions to conserve Kansas' wildlife**



Mixed grass prairie/Mike Blair

*“The collaborative approach of ‘A Future for Kansas Wildlife’ paves the way for effective wildlife conservation. It’s a logical approach for framing a better future for our grandchildren’s ability to enjoy the excellent outdoor resources we have experienced.”*

*– Steven G. Sorensen,  
President of Kansas  
Wildlife Federation*

the species on the level of risk, and to associate them with habitats. This questionnaire was sent to about 200 experts, and posted on the internet. Input was taken for 30 days.

The process for public input culminated with a Summit Meeting, attended by more than 70 people. Experts and stakeholders were invited, as well as the general public. At this meeting, participants confirmed the information gathered on the questionnaire, prioritized habitat types within Conservation Regions, and identified top issues and strategies for those habitats.

A web page for the Plan was incorporated into the KWDP website, which explained the purpose of the plan and provided background information. As progress was made, the site was updated, adding the SGCN list, the Questionnaire, and the Draft and Final Plan.



Loggerhead Shrike/USFWS, Gary Stolz



Prairie chicken/USFWS, Gary Halvorsen

## Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

David Chadwick  
Wildlife Diversity Associate  
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 725  
Washington, DC 20001  
Tel: 202.624.7890  
chadwick@fishwildlife.org  
www.teaming.com  
www.fishwildlife.org

## State Contact

Ken Brunson  
Kansas Department of  
Wildlife and Parks  
512 SE 25th Avenue  
Pratt, KS 67124  
Tel: 620-672-0792  
kenb@wp.state.ks.us  
www.kdwp.state.ks.us