

Managing Michigan's Wildlife:

A landowner's guide



This partnership was formed between both private and public organizations in order to address private lands wildlife issues. Individuals share resources, information, and expertise. This landowner's guide has been a combined effort between these groups working towards one goal: Natural Resources Education. We hope this guide provides you the knowledge and the motivation to make positive changes for our environment.

Editors and Project Coordinators:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Sargent". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

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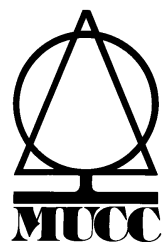




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FOREWORD

Michigan's landscape is changing, and many of these changes are threatening our state's wildlife heritage. Over the past 150 years, logging, agriculture, industry, and urbanization have changed the face of Michigan and the wildlife it can support. These actions, especially when done unwisely, have come at a cost we did not anticipate: polluted waters; contaminated soils; and the loss of wetlands, grasslands, and forests, and some of the wildlife they supported.

Change continues and will further impact our wildlife resources, and our own quality of life. Unlimited low-density growth is destroying and degrading our wildlife habitats. Open spaces that wildlife need to live are rapidly being converted to pavement, houses, and other human developments that are unsuitable to most wildlife. From 1982 to 1992, the state lost nearly eight percent of its farmland through conversion to other uses. This loss translates to over 850,000 acres per year, or 10 acres per hour. State planners project that between 1990 and 2020, 1.4 to 2 million additional acres of land will be converted to urban development, even though the state's population will increase by less than 12 percent. This conversion increase equals almost as much urbanized land as was recorded for the entire state in 1978. The amount of land in jeopardy is larger than four average sized counties. Low-density sprawl is a reality today and will become an even bigger threat in the near future. The continual loss of open space, and consequently wildlife habitat, is the biggest reason for population declines of many animals, both aquatic and terrestrial.

As a society, we must collectively find the will to address the issues of gain-now, pay-later development. Short-term gain achieved without giving proper concern to long-term environmental consequences may have devastating results for all of us. As property owners concerned with conservation, there is much we can do to protect and improve the wildlife habitat we own, and in turn, the environment we live in. Working as individuals, or in concert with our neighbors and community, we can become better land managers.

The purpose of this guide is to present landowners with a variety of methods through which they can improve wildlife habitat on their property, and ease the consequences of our changed ecosystems. Each chapter pertains to managing different ecosystems or species in Michigan. Regardless of the size of your property, whether it is an urban back yard, a "back forty", or more than a section, you can set goals and take the proper steps to improve your property for wildlife. Every piece of property is important to the big picture, and it is not too late to begin improving our land. This guide provides the information you will need to conserve Michigan's plants, animals, and ecosystems.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When the Private Lands Working Group discussed and approved the creation of this publication, it was evident that it would take the efforts of many individuals in order for it to be a success. With enthusiasm, the individuals or organizations detailed or noted below have contributed to this publication and demonstrated unequivocal commitment to the conservation and preservation of our Michigan natural resources. Together we had a vision -- together we accomplished our goal. Thank you.

First and foremost, thanks must be bestowed to Mr. Tom Huggler, Outdoor Images, who was hired to write the first draft of this publication. Tom persevered through endless meetings with the enthusiasm and the dedication of a true conservationist.

Another individual who made enormous contributions to this landowner guide is Ms. Amy Berry, MDNR, Wildlife Division. Amy has impacted all aspects of this guide through writing, editing, graphic design, and artwork. She arrived in May 1998 with a variety of skills and has demonstrated commendable commitment. Other individuals who provided artwork are Mr. Mitch Smith, former MUCC Art Director, and Ms. Marie Gougeon, MSG Graphics. As you can see, these three individuals did an extraordinary job bringing our Michigan plants and animals to life throughout the pages of this guide.

Mr. John Paskus from the Michigan Natural Features Inventory must also be individually recognized for his contribution to this guide. The editors believe John's expertise, dedication, and strive for excellence substantially increased the quality and broadened the scope of this publication.

As with any publication, there are many individuals who work behind the scenes making copies, assembling information, and providing support. We would like to thank them as an entity and let them know how much they are appreciated. One critical team player was Mr. Bruce Warren who should be applauded for not only his humor, but for preparing several chapters of this guide and being there whenever he was needed.

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As mentioned earlier, the Private Lands Working Group contrived this project. The Group is an assembly of public and private organizations with the goal of developing programs and projects to facilitate habitat development on private lands. In 1995, the group collectively set out to create a landowner guide that would instruct individuals how to manage their land for wildlife. The individuals listed below have been instrumental in the creation of this guide through one or more of the following ways: writing, reviewing, expertise, or support.

Private Lands Working Group Members:

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Michigan Farmers Union
Michigan National Wild Turkey Federation
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Saginaw, St. Clair, and Washtenaw Chapters
The Ruffed Grouse Society
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Although at times we felt the end was far, far away, it is with much excitement that we provide this product to the public. Throughout this lengthy process, we have increased our own knowledge, built friendships, and strengthened ties -- all in the best interest of wildlife. Once again, thank you to all the individuals in the foreground and background that contributed to this publication and, most importantly, to you the public for taking steps toward natural resource conservation. Working together we can make a difference for wildlife.

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