



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.