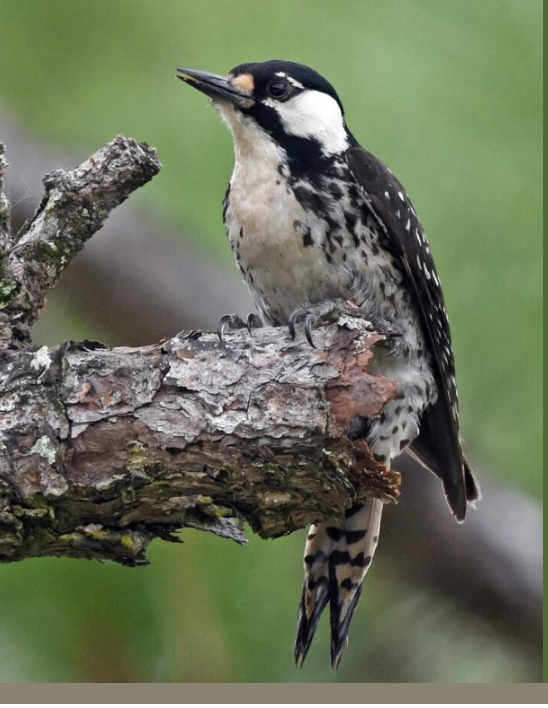


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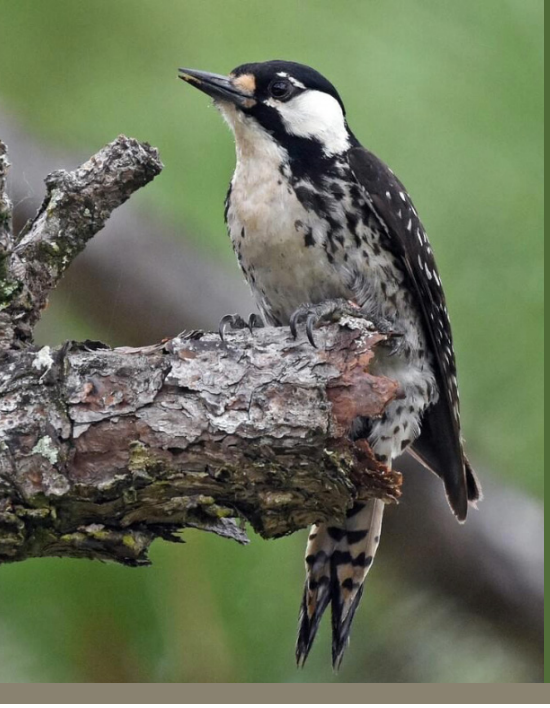
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v
CHAPTER 1 ALABAMA'S WILDLIFE 1
Introduction 1
Identifying Species of Greatest Conservation Need 3
Overview of Alabama's Major Taxa Groups 11
CHAPTER 2 ALABAMA'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND KEY HABITATS 53
Alabama's Physiography and Ecoregions 53
Key Habitats 57
CHAPTER 3 CONSERVATION THREATS 227
Introduction 227
Alabama Invasive Species 246
Alabama SGCN Health Threats 262
Threats to Alabama SGCN 278
CHAPTER 4 CONSERVATION ACTIONS 328
1. Habitat Restoration and Management 328
2. Land Acquisition and Protection 329
3. Capacity Building through Alliances and Partnerships 330
4. Education and Outreach 330
5. Regulatory Actions through Law and Policy 331
6. Species Management and Reintroduction 331
7. Land Use Planning and Strategic Development 331
8. Data Collection and Analysis 332
9. Surveys, Research, and Status Monitoring 332
10. Invasive and Exotic Species Control 333
Identifying Conservation Actions for Alabama SGCN 337

CHAPTER 5 MONITORING 390
Alabama's Monitoring Strategy 390
Standards for Measuring Effectiveness of Conservation Actions 391
Adaptive Management and Plan Revision 392
CHAPTER 6 OUTREACH 395
Introduction 395
SWAP Organizational Structure 395
Taxa Team Structure 396
Coordination with Federal, State, Local and Tribal Partners and Stakeholders 397
CHAPTER 7 CONSERVATION PRIORITY AREAS AND CORRIDORS 400
Introduction 400
Development of Conservation Priority Areas 400
Alabama Corridors 435
ACRONYMS 439
LITERATURE CITED 441
APPENDICES 462



2025-2035

ALABAMA

State Wildlife Action Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Alabama State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) provides a strategic outline for conserving the state's species richness and supporting ecosystems. The plan is developed to guide statewide conservation efforts and meet federal requirements under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program. Overall, the plan provides a science based, comprehensive strategy, emphasizing early intervention, habitat protection, and landscape scale management approaches to sustain wildlife, reduce needs for future federal listings, and to address challenges facing Alabama's wildlife and habitats.

Alabama remains one of the top states in North America for species richness due to the vast array of habitats. The SWAP identifies species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), within amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, crayfishes, fishes, mussels, freshwater snails, and vascular plants taxa groups. Species are prioritized based on multiple factors, including federal status ranks, state rankings, population size and trend, distribution, degree of habitat specialization, and severity of threats. This 10-year SWAP review began with updating rankings for all species taxa groups. The need to rank and assign SGCN species is primarily due to environmental changes from degradation, fragmentation, and habitat loss. Compounding pressures on key habitats occur from urban expansion, agriculture, infrastructure, and incompatible land use and continue to change the quality, quantity and connectivity throughout these ecosystems. These changes disrupt habitat integrity and function and threaten the survival of individual species within them. In addition to habitat related challenges, a wide range of additional threats are identified within the SWAP. These include invasive species, pollution, human intrusion or disturbance, and impacts of weather events. Addressing these overlapping statewide threats requires prioritization and identification of primary conservation actions needed for successful wildlife and aquatic resource recovery efforts.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) compiled, coordinated, and integrated the best available scientific information on the status of Alabama's wildlife, along with habitats, threats, and conservation actions through taxa expert meetings, as well as engaging public and private stakeholders. A total of 2,136 species were assessed during taxa expert meetings, with 1,212 species identified as SGCN. These SGCN fauna include 37 amphibians, 48 reptiles, 67 birds, 38 mammals, 63 crayfishes, 116 fishes, 137 mussels, 148 freshwater snails, and 558 vascular plants. There was a significant increase in the total number of SGCN species in this SWAP revision with the addition of the vascular plant taxa group, as well as the inclusion of Priority 3 species as SGCN.

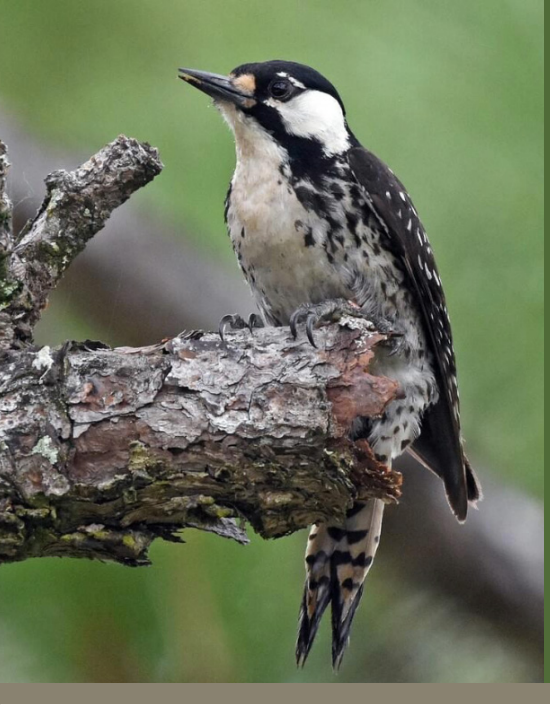
The SWAP and SGCN lists serve as the foundation for guiding research priorities, directing conservation actions, and focusing resources where they will have the greatest impact. SGCN were associated with 15 key terrestrial habitats and 15 aquatic habitats, including several forest types, wetlands, and other unique communities such as caves and coastal

beaches. Along with habitat associations for each SGCN, the SWAP lays out a comprehensive set of conservation actions to address causes of species decline. These strategies include habitat restoration and management, land acquisition and protection, partnerships, education, invasive species control, research and data collection, policy and regulatory support, and population monitoring. A strong emphasis is placed on adaptive management which uses monitoring data and field results to evaluate effectiveness and refine strategies over time.

Restoration, protection, monitoring and enhancement of priority species and their associated habitats are all central components of this plan. Updating and adjusting the SWAP at least every 10 years ensures that conservation goals remain relevant, measurable and transparent. Species and habitat monitoring components within the SWAP connect implementation of conservation actions with management objectives. This framework allows tracking of SGCN populations, habitat conditions, and impacts of conservation actions.

Public outreach and stakeholder engagement are also critical to the success of the SWAP. Conservation efforts would be nearly nonexistent without the support and involvement of hunters and anglers, landowners, educators, legislators, state and federal resource agencies, non-governmental agencies, sustainable forest industry, and other key partners. An effective measure of success for the plan is the degree to which conservation partners integrate SGCN, key habitats, and conservation actions into their plans and programs.

In summary, Alabama's SWAP is a comprehensive conservation strategy for protecting the state's unique natural resources. It recognizes the presence of current threats, importance of education and outreach, and needs for collaborative and adaptive management for species preservation and recovery. Together, SWAP elements create a standardized framework across all states, ensuring that conservation efforts are proactive, transparent, and collaborative while addressing both species and habitat needs.



2025-2035

ALABAMA

State Wildlife Action Plan



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WFF gratefully acknowledges the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the revision of the Alabama SWAP. Any attempt to list every contributor would inevitably be incomplete, but we extend our sincere appreciation to all who shared their knowledge, experience, and time in support of Alabama's wildlife and helped strengthen this revision of the SWAP. Their collective efforts will support the successful implementation of the SWAP over the next decade.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the SWAP Taxa Team leaders, SWAP Development Team and experts for their dedication, expertise, and thoughtful guidance throughout the planning process. Countless hours were devoted to evaluating SGCN, key habitats, conservation threats, and conservation actions to improve the status of SGCN. Their contributions were essential to the success of this effort.

We thank our federal partners at the USFWS and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for their assistance in aligning this plan with national and regional conservation priorities, as well as for their contributions to the SWAP revision and review process.

We appreciate the collaboration of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Alabama's state-recognized Tribal Nations, local governments, non-profit organizations, universities, and private citizens, all of whom shared expertise, reviewed drafts, and participated in discussions that helped shape this plan.

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