

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



A Template for Your Wildlife Habitat Management Plan

Authors

Emily Tauber, Jarred Brooke, Mitch Zischke,
Fred Whitford, Phil Cox, Jonathan Ferris, William Horan



Introduction

Creating a wildlife habitat management plan is a worthwhile endeavor for any landowner interested in providing habitat for wildlife. A well-thought-out plan will help determine the necessary steps to make your property more attractive to wildlife. In essence, a plan is a roadmap to meet the long-term wildlife goals for your property.

Some landowners may be interested in writing their own habitat management plan and would benefit from having a template — like the one provided by this publication — as a guideline. Others may choose to seek help from a professional while writing their plan. Either way, having a plan for your property before you start is an important step in your long-term success.

How to use this template

The publication is a template to help you start writing your own wildlife habitat management plan. All the sections on this PDF are fillable — you can type directly in the boxes and save your file. However, if you prefer, you can print the template and fill it out by hand. We have also created a companion publication to this template, FNR-616-W *Creating a Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for Landowners*, which helps provide more information about each section. That publication can be found at <https://extension.purdue.edu/pondwildlife/>.

Filling out this plan — especially Section 2 — is also helpful if you plan to work with a professional biologist. Much of the information in this template is information a biologist will want to know when creating a plan. Thinking about this information prior to meeting with a biologist can help them create a plan better suited to you and your property.



Wildlife Habitat Management Plan Template

1. Property Information

Complete this section by providing basic information about your property.

Date of Plan

Property Owner

Property Address

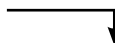
County Township

Name and Contact Information for Local Natural Resource Professionals (e.g., Wildlife Biologist, Forester, Private Consultant, etc.)

Habitat Management Equipment List

What equipment do you have to use on the property? You can also list equipment that you can rent (e.g., seed drill from local Soil and Water Conservation District), or borrow.

Check the box
if you have
access to
this tool



Equipment

- ☐ Tractor
☐ ATV and/or UTV

TRACTOR OR ATV/UTV IMPLEMENTS

- ☐ No-till drill
☐ Rototiller
☐ Brush mower
☐ Disk
☐ Cultipacker
☐ Herbicide sprayer
☐ Other implements (list):

HAND TOOLS

- ☐ Chainsaw
☐ Handsaw
☐ Brush saw
☐ Backpack sprayer
☐ Leaf blower
☐ Drip torch
☐ Other hand tools (list):
☐ Other equipment (list):

Property History and Management

What past practices, natural events, or land uses have occurred on your property before and during your ownership? (e.g., timber harvest, prescribed fire, windstorm, farming, invasive species control, conservation or utility easement, drainage work/tiling)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Conservation Program Information

Is your property enrolled in any conservation programs? (e.g., CRP, EQIP, WRP, Classified Forest and Wildlands Program).
Are there any management restrictions for areas enrolled in these programs?

2. Property Goals and Objectives

Determining goals and objectives for your property will help you decide the right management practices to improve your property for wildlife. Goals should be broad and long-term, whereas objectives should be more focused and achievable in a few years.

Overall Property Goals

Which of the following are important goals or uses for your property? (Check all that apply)
Once you have selected your goals, rank their importance to you with 1 being most important.

Check the box
if this is an
important goal

<u>Property Goal</u>	<u>Rank</u>
☐ Income from the property (timber, crops, etc.)	
☐ Recreation (hunting, hiking, birdwatching, etc.)	
☐ Aesthetics (scenic beauty, enjoying nature, etc.)	
☐ Wood products (wood for woodworking, firewood, etc.)	
☐ Non-wood products (maple syrup, beekeeping, etc.)	
☐ Wildlife	
☐ Other	
☐ Other	

Wildlife Goals

Which of the following species or species groups interests you? (Check all that apply)
Once you have selected important wildlife, rank their importance to you with 1 being most important.

Check the box
if this is an
important goal

<u>Wildlife Species or Group</u>	<u>Rank</u>
☐ White-tailed deer	
☐ Wild turkey	
☐ Ring-necked pheasant	
☐ Northern bobwhite	
☐ American woodcock	
☐ Ruffed grouse	
☐ Mourning dove	
☐ Squirrels	
☐ Cottontail rabbit	
☐ Furbearers (coyote, fox, raccoon, beaver, etc.)	
☐ Bats	
☐ Grassland songbirds	
☐ Forest songbirds	
☐ Hawks and owls	
☐ Waterfowl	
☐ Reptiles	
☐ Amphibians	
☐ Other	

Priority Wildlife Species: From the list above, what are the most important wildlife species to you and why?

Wildlife Interests: Why are you interested in improving your property for wildlife (providing a home for wildlife, increasing wildlife diversity, improving hunting, improving wildlife viewing, etc.)?

Property Goals: Combine the information from the sections above and write out your top 1 to 3 goals. Write them out in clear and concise statements.

Property Objectives: How do you plan to reach your goals? How can you balance your different goals? Create 1 to 3 short objectives for each goal.

3. Property Assessment

A property assessment provides a starting point for your management plan. It helps determine the current condition of the property for wildlife.

Description of Entire Property

This should include a brief description of the property, current land uses, and number of acres for each land type.

Total # of acres

Woodland acres

Grassland acres

Wetland acres

Cropland (including food plots) acres

Other (describe) acres

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



General description of property, surrounding properties, and nearby geographical features (rivers, lakes, topography, etc.)

Important property features: think of areas that are special that you may want to preserve like unique vegetation types, geological features, rare plants, cultural resources, etc.

Wildlife Species: What wildlife species have you seen on your property? List them here.

Current Condition: What is the quality of the current habitat on your property? Think in terms of the habitat needs (food, water, cover, space) of your priority wildlife species. Refer to Section 8 for additional resources about the habitat requirements of different species.

Limiting Factors: What factors on your property and the neighboring properties may be limiting the habitat quality for your priority wildlife species from Section 2 (e.g. low amount of woody cover for northern bobwhite)?

Ideal Condition: What does ideal habitat look like for the priority species on your property in 5, 10, or 20 years?

4. Maps (checklist)

Include any maps that you think will be helpful. Add any maps you find useful at the end of this document as a supplement to your plan.

Checkbox



Maps Refer to Section 8 for online resources for acquiring maps.

- ☐ Property Boundary Map
- ☐ Soil Map
- ☐ Topography Map
- ☐ Property Inventory and Habitat Management Unit Map
- ☐ Other Maps – describe

5. Habitat Management Units and Practices

Once a property inventory has been completed and maps have been created, next you can decide how to improve the property for wildlife. Include general plans for each individual habitat management unit (or the entire property as a whole). A habitat management unit is an area that has similar vegetation, soils and/or other features and will have similar management.

**If you have more than two habitat management units for each cover type, templates for each additional unit can be printed off and added to the end of this plan as a supplement.*

WOODLANDS

Use for any forested areas on your property.

Woodland Unit #1

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Woodland Unit Characteristics

Overstory tree species composition

Hard and soft mast-producing trees and shrubs (number, species, description)

Snags and live cavity trees (number of each)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Understory composition

Invasive species

Areas of concern

Woodland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Timber harvest
- ☐ Forest stand improvement
- ☐ Create snag(s)
- ☐ Create wildlife opening(s)
- ☐ Prescribed fire
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Edge feathering
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Create wildlife wetlands
- ☐ Create brush piles
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY

DATE SCHEDULED

DATE COMPLETED

1.			
2.			
3.			

Woodland Unit #2

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Woodland Unit Characteristics

Overstory tree species composition

Hard and soft mast-producing trees and shrubs (number, species, description)

Snags and live cavity trees (number of each)

Understory composition

Invasive species

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Areas of concern

Woodland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? (*check all that apply*)

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Timber harvest
- ☐ Forest stand improvement
- ☐ Create snag(s)
- ☐ Create wildlife opening(s)
- ☐ Prescribed fire
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Edge feathering
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Create wildlife wetlands
- ☐ Create brush piles
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY

DATE SCHEDULED

DATE COMPLETED

1.

2.

3.



GRASSLANDS

Use for old fields, native grass/pollinator plantings, pastures, and hayfields on your property.

Grassland Unit #1

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Is the field tiled (drain tiles)?

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Grassland Unit Characteristics

Herbaceous composition (grasses and forbs)

Woody composition (brambles, shrubs, and trees)

Invasive species

Areas of concern (tile holes, drainage ditches, wet areas, hidden debris, etc.)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Grassland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? (check all that apply)

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Cool-season grass control
- ☐ Old field management
- ☐ Plant native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Disking
- ☐ Prescribed fire
- ☐ Interseeding native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Herbicide application
- ☐ Woody cover or brush piles
- ☐ Plant food plot
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY	DATE SCHEDULED	DATE COMPLETED
1.		
2.		
3.		



Grassland Unit #2

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Is the field tilled (drain tiles)?

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Grassland Unit Characteristics

Herbaceous composition (grasses and forbs)

Woody composition (brambles, shrubs, and trees)

Invasive species

Areas of concern (tile holes, drainage ditches, wet areas, hidden debris, etc.)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Grassland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? (check all that apply)

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Cool-season grass control
- ☐ Old field management
- ☐ Plant native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Disking
- ☐ Prescribed fire
- ☐ Interseeding native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Herbicide application
- ☐ Woody cover or brush piles
- ☐ Plant food plot
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY	DATE SCHEDULED	DATE COMPLETED
1.		
2.		
3.		



WETLANDS

Use for any wetlands on your property.

Wetland Unit #1

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Wetland Unit Characteristics

Herbaceous composition (grass and forbs)

Woody composition (brambles, shrubs, and trees)

Invasive species

Areas of concern (leaks in dam, old or current water control structures, etc.)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Wetland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? *(check all that apply)*

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Wetland construction or repair
- ☐ Wetland restoration
- ☐ Water level management
- ☐ Water control structure
- ☐ Add nesting structures
- ☐ Plant food plot
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY

DATE SCHEDULED

DATE COMPLETED

1.

2.

3.



Wetland Unit #2

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Wetland Unit Characteristics

Herbaceous composition (grass and forbs)

Woody composition (brambles, shrubs, and trees)

Invasive species

Areas of concern (leaks in dam, old or current water control structures, etc.)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Wetland Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? (check all that apply)

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Wetland construction or repair
- ☐ Wetland restoration
- ☐ Water level management
- ☐ Water control structure
- ☐ Add nesting structures
- ☐ Plant food plot
- ☐ Invasive species control
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY

DATE SCHEDULED

DATE COMPLETED

1.

2.

3.



CROPLAND

Use for any crop fields or food plots on your property.

Cropland Unit #1

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage Is the field tilled (drain tiles)?

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Cropland Unit Characteristics

Current crop and management (tillage, cover crops, etc.)

Future crop and management (tillage, cover crops, etc.)

Invasive or weedy species

Areas of concern

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Cropland and Food Plot Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this unit for wildlife? (check all that apply)

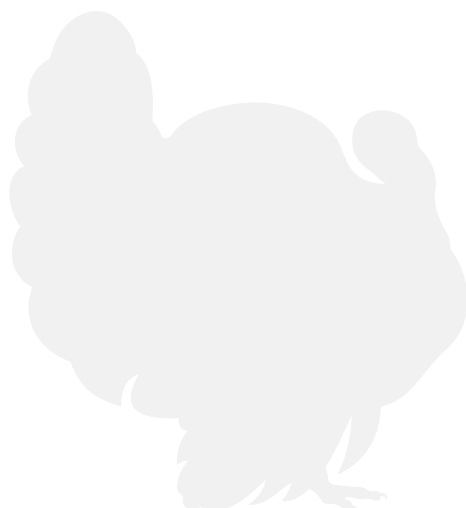
- ☐ No management
- ☐ Delay crop harvest
- ☐ Leave crops unharvested
- ☐ Plant cool-season food plot
- ☐ Plant warm-season food plot
- ☐ Plant native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Take soil samples
- ☐ Fertilize or lime
- ☐ Weed control
- ☐ Create field border
- ☐ Create riparian buffer
- ☐ Create wetland
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY	DATE SCHEDULED	DATE COMPLETED
1.		
2.		
3.		



Cropland Unit #2

Habitat management unit name and #

Size (acres)

Soil type(s)

Drainage Is the field tilled (drain tiles)?

Habitat management unit objective

Current condition

Ideal condition

Cropland Unit Characteristics

Current crop and management (tillage, cover crops, etc.)

Future crop and management (tillage, cover crops, etc.)

Invasive or weedy species

Areas of concern

HABITAT MANAGEMENT



Cropland and Food Plot Management Practices

What needs to be done to improve this compartment for wildlife? (check all that apply)

- ☐ No management
- ☐ Delay crop harvest
- ☐ Leave crops unharvested
- ☐ Plant cool-season food plot
- ☐ Plant warm-season food plot
- ☐ Plant native grasses and forbs
- ☐ Plant trees and shrubs
- ☐ Take soil samples
- ☐ Fertilize or lime
- ☐ Weed control
- ☐ Create field border
- ☐ Create riparian buffer
- ☐ Create wetland
- ☐ Other

Habitat Management Activities

Describe in more detail what habitat management activities need to occur to improve this habitat management unit.

Habitat Management Activities Schedule

ACTIVITY	DATE SCHEDULED	DATE COMPLETED
1.		
2.		
3.		



6. Inventory and Monitoring Wildlife

In order to determine if your management is working, you need to evaluate the response. This can be creating an inventory of wildlife species before and after management or tracking wildlife populations over time. It should also involve monitoring the habitat created through management. The information you collect will help guide your future management decisions.

<i>Check if you plan to use</i>	<i>Monitoring technique</i>	<i>What is being monitored?</i>	<i>Description</i>
☐	Species checklist	All species (plants and wildlife)	Maintain a species checklist for the property. Add species as you see or hear them. Used for presence/absence.
☐	Trail cameras	White-tailed deer, eastern wild turkeys, and furbearers (coyote, fox, bobcat, etc.)	Use multiple cameras and set in same location each year. Used for presence/absence and population index.
☐	Scent stations	Mammals, especially furbearers	Different scents can be used to attract various mammals. Used for presence/absence.
☐	Call counts	Birds and amphibians ▪ Breeding bird surveys (songbirds) ▪ Whistle/crow counts (bobwhite and pheasant) ▪ Gobble counts (turkey) ▪ Peent counts (woodcock) ▪ Drumming counts (ruffed grouse) ▪ Call surveys (frogs and toads)	Call counts will differ between species. Call counts for songbirds and upland gamebirds should occur around sunrise during the breeding season. Call counts for amphibians should occur in the spring and/or summer just after dark in the evening. Used for presence/absence and tracking populations trends.
☐	Gamebird brood surveys	Pheasant, bobwhite, and turkey	Count the number of hens and young in a brood as you encounter them on your property during the summer (Jun-Sep). Used to provide index of reproductive success.
☐	Nest box, roost, or bat house survey	Cavity-nesting birds, wood ducks, and bats	Observe birds using nest boxes. Observe bats leaving roosts or bat houses at dusk. Used to determine presence/absence and use of nest box or bat house.
☐	Coverboards	Amphibians (salamanders) and reptiles (snakes).	Coverboards made of wood, plastic, or sheet metal can be placed in the woods or fields and checked periodically. Used for presence/absence.
☐	Plant surveys	Trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers	Used to track plant diversity or identify invasive species on your property.
☐	Permanent photo locations	Habitat condition	Take pictures at the same spot before and after management. Provides a visual of how habitat conditions have changed.
☐	Hunting and trapping harvest records	Game species - pheasant, bobwhite, turkey, furbearers, deer, waterfowl, etc.	Species checklist of what is seen and what is harvested. Used to measure presence and abundance; compare harvests year to year.



7. Plan or Goal Change

As time goes on, the habitat on your property or your personal goals may change. List those changes below.

Plan or Goal Changes

How have your plans or goals changed? How will that impact future management to improve wildlife habitat?

8. Additional Resources

Resources that will be helpful in creating a wildlife habitat management plan are listed below. You should also keep a list of other resources (publications, professionals, etc.) you used to help you create your wildlife management plan.

Wildlife Habitat Management Plan Resource List

Purdue Extension Pond and Wildlife Habitat Management Website - <https://extension.purdue.edu/pondwildlife/>
 Find Your County Pond and Wildlife Management Contact - <https://extension.purdue.edu/pondwildlife/county-resources/>
 Managing Your Woods for White-Tailed Deer – Purdue Extension FNR-596-W - https://edustore.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=FNR-596-W
 Renovating Native Warm Season Grasses for Wildlife: A Land Manager's Guide – Purdue Extension FNR-548 - https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=FNR-548
 Assessing Your Land's Potential for Wildlife – Purdue Extension FNR-175-W - <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-175-W.pdf>
 Indiana DNR Habitat Factsheets - <https://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/3025.htm>
 My Land Plan - <https://mylandplan.org/>
 Property Boundary Maps - <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com/>
 Soil Maps - <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>
 Property and Topography Maps - <https://maps.indiana.edu/>
 Historical Aerial Imagery for Indiana - <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/>

Find Out More

The Purdue Extension Education Store offers a variety of publications related to forestry and wildlife management.
edustore.purdue.edu



Managing Your Woods for White-Tailed Deer
 (FNR-596-W)



Creating a Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for Landowners
 (FNR-616-W)

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mike Mycroft and Jason Wade, Wildlife Biologists with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife and Brian MacGowan, Purdue University for providing feedback that improved this publication.
 Thanks to Dawn Minns for help with layout and design.



Reference in this publication to any specific commercial product, process, or service, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement, recommendation, or certification of any kind by Purdue Extension. Individuals using such products assume responsibility for their use in accordance with current directions of the manufacturer.



Forestry and Natural Resources

extension.purdue.edu/pondwildlife

Find out more at
THE EDUCATION STORE
edustore.purdue.edu

An Equal Access/Equal Opportunity University

February 2021