



2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2024 INITIATIVES



OHIO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

As we close 150 years of conservation in Ohio, we now look forward to the future of improving fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife had much to celebrate in 2023. Lake Erie's walleye hatch was, again, one of the best ever recorded. This will sustain years of great walleye fishing for Ohio's anglers. Like walleye, Ohio's white-tailed deer population is world-renowned. Ohio's hunters have responded, checking more than 200,000 deer in both the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons. The number of bald eagle nests statewide is moving toward 1,000 – as we know, that's quite a change from just a few decades ago, when Ohio had four active nests.

Our accomplishments go well beyond Ohio's native species. Three brand new fish cleaning stations were opened on the shores of Lake Erie. We celebrated Bird Ohio Day and the opening of the redesigned Magee Marsh Visitor Center. The kids' fishing pond, shooting ranges, and walk-through viewing displays at the Ohio State Fair continue to be popular attractions for multiple generations of people. The refurbished Senecaville State Fish Hatchery is ready to serve Ohioans for decades.

We are the steward of thousands of acres of public land. In 2023, we added to our holdings at Woodland Trails Wildlife Area in Preble County, Simco Wildlife Area in Coshocton County, and Big Island Wildlife Area in Marion County. We partnered with Ducks Unlimited to protect a wetland complex adjacent to Moxley Wildlife Area in Erie County. We have also received a donation for a new wildlife area, now named Conkel Wildlife Area, in Pike County. Finally, the visionary leadership and support of Governor MikeDeWine and Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Mary Mertz have helped us restore wetlands and improve water quality through the H2Ohio program.

Kendra S. Wecker

– Kendra Wecker, Chief, Ohio Division of Wildlife

An exciting report from the Wildlife Management Institute, Responsive Management, and Southwick Associates showed that wildlife-based recreation contributed nearly \$12.5 billion to Ohio's economy in 2022. The study was conducted for the Division of Wildlife and surveyed Ohio residents to gauge their participation in hunting, fishing, target shooting, and wildlife viewing. This reinforced what we already know: conservation in Ohio provides countless opportunities for people to get outside and enjoy wildlife, and those activities are important for the economy.

We have much to accomplish in the year ahead. In 2024, we're celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. We'll continue with ongoing projects to learn more about wild turkey, ruffed grouse, yellow perch, mudpuppy, eastern hellbender, and black bear populations.



It's an honor and a privilege to work alongside such dedicated conservationists. Looking back, we've made great strides and Ohio remains a leader in the wildlife world. Looking forward, we will build on those successes at the forefront of conservation.



The Ohio Division of Wildlife's mission is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all.



2023 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

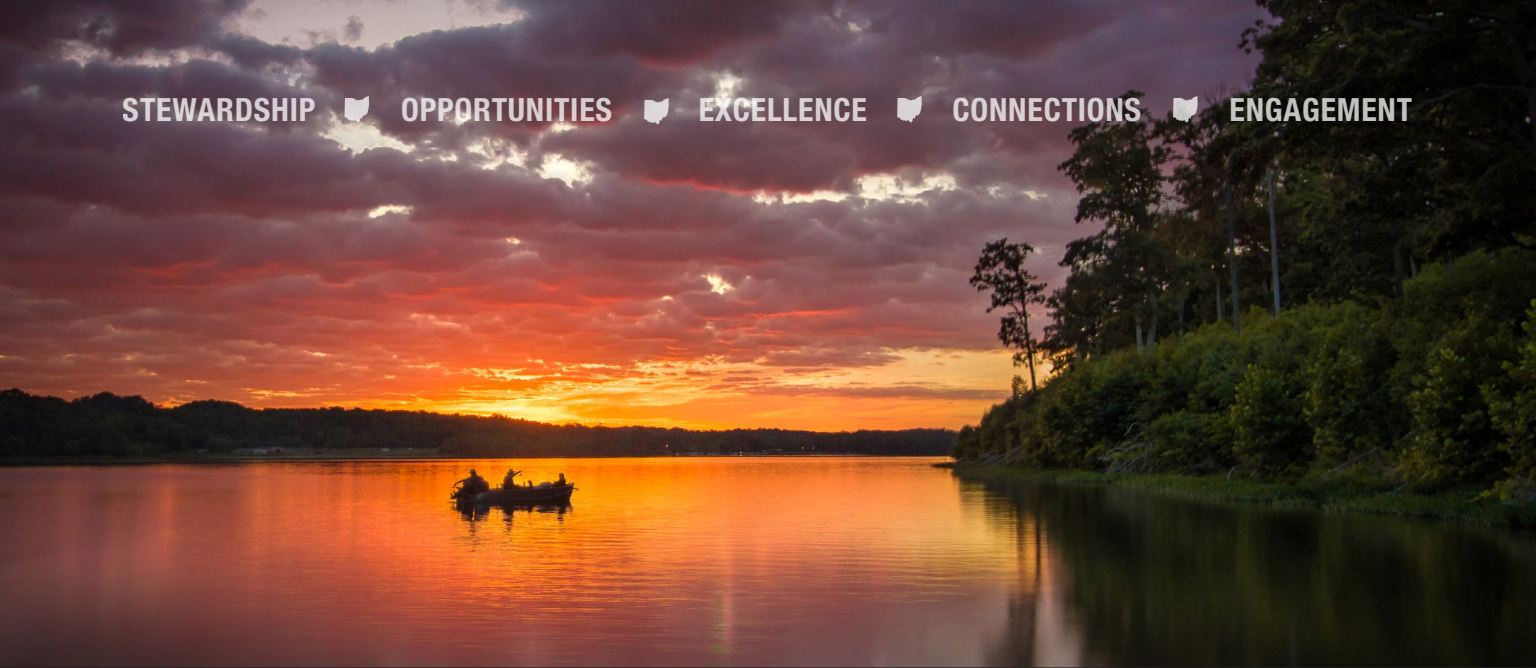
- **150 Years of Conservation:** Concluded the 150th anniversary of the Ohio Division of Wildlife. The agency was founded in 1873 as the Ohio Fish Commission. The anniversary was commemorated at events and through communications, including special banners, magazine articles, and promotional items.
- **Economic Study:** A report from the Wildlife Management Institute, Responsive Management, and Southwick Associates showed that wildlife-based recreation contributed nearly \$12.5 billion to Ohio's economy in 2022. The study was conducted for the Division of Wildlife and surveyed Ohio residents to gauge their participation in outdoor recreation and the economic impact of those activities. The survey focused on Ohioans' involvement in hunting, fishing, target shooting, and wildlife viewing.
- **Ohio Wildlife Diversity Conference:** The 39th annual wildlife diversity conference was held in March at The Ohio State University. Ohio's event is the largest single-day wildlife diversity conference in the country. Attendees were treated to presentations about our 150th anniversary, native darters, wildlife photography, spiders, and more.
- **DataOhio "Where to Fish" Visualization:** The Division of Wildlife worked cooperatively with Innovate Ohio, Lt. Governor Husted's initiative to provide public access to State of Ohio data, to provide anglers with a database that can guide them to fishing opportunities in inland waters.
- **ErieProH Certification:** Erie ProH, a certification program for Lake Erie fishing guides, was launched in August. The curriculum-based program, developed by Ohio Sea Grant and the Division of Wildlife in cooperation with Lake Erie charter boat captains, provides guides with education, outreach, and materials that lead to certification.
- **Controlled Hunts:** This year marked the third year of controlled hunts being primarily offered through the online licensing system. More than 16,000 unique customers submitted over 120,000 applications for controlled hunts.
- **Wild Ohio Magazine:** The magazine, which features engaging fish, wildlife, and habitat information, has more than 40,000 subscribers.
- **Grant-funded Projects:** Successfully leveraged more than \$28 million in grant funds to perform management and research projects that benefited species and their habitats. More importantly, partner and in-kind matches were used to support 93% of the state's cost share, meaning it cost the division \$650,000 to complete \$37 million of projects.
- **Partner with a Payer:** Partnered with Ten Point Archery in Akron to host a Partner with a Payer event where employees from Ten Point Archery met with Ohio Division of Wildlife, National Shooting Sports Foundation, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff to acknowledge how Ten Point Archery's contributions in excise taxes support conservation. A second Partner with a Payer event was hosted at Castalia State Fish Hatchery.
- **Wildlife Officer Cadets:** The Ohio Division of Wildlife hired 13 new wildlife officer cadets. Upon completing the basic peace officer training, they will complete a specialized wildlife officer school. They will then be assigned to the field, where they will work with a field training officer. This class ensures that all 88 counties are represented by a wildlife officer.
- **Mentorship Program:** The Law Enforcement section developed a mentorship program for cadets attending the police officer's academy.
- **Catchable Rainbow Trout:** Spring rainbow trout stockings were adjusted to improve fishing opportunities following an evaluation that demonstrated the benefits of stocking smaller waters near population centers. These adjustments increased the number of waters stocked statewide, increased shoreline access, and concentrated fish, thereby improving catches of stocked fish.
- **Online Licensing System:** The Ohio Wildlife Licensing System managed 6,714,951 customer accounts, resulting in the sale of 1,885,858 licenses and products. In 2023, additions to the system included increased security protocols, harvest inconsistency reports for wildlife officers, and one-year shooting range permits.
- **First Cast:** First Cast was officially launched. It is modeled after Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's Passport to Fishing. An improved manual and training resources helped provide training for volunteers and partner organizations.



UPGRADED FACILITIES

2023 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Conservation Facility Enhancements at the Columbus and Toledo Zoos:** Through a settlement with Monsanto, ODNR received \$750,000, which was used to improve conservation facilities at the Columbus and Toledo zoos where rare mussel, fish, reptile, and amphibian research and repatriation projects are supported through our diversity program. Zoos provide full-time animal husbandry for restoring wildlife populations.
- Capital Projects:** Completed nine projects totaling \$19 million: Magee Marsh Wildlife Area Visitor Center; Magee Marsh Wildlife Area shoreline protection; Mazurik Boat Launch fish cleaning station and restroom; Senecaville State Fish Hatchery improvements; dam rehabilitation or decommissioning projects at Wingfoot, Woodbury, Spencer, Spring Valley, and Six Mile.
- Fish Stocking:** Ohio's six state fish hatcheries produced and stocked nearly 41 million sport fish of 11 different species in public waters, providing opportunities for anglers that would not otherwise exist in many waters.
- Senecaville Hatchery Improvements:** A \$1.6 million construction project was completed at Senecaville State Fish Hatchery to improve water supply, ponds, and electrical service. The hatchery produces walleye, saugeye, hybrid-striped bass, and channel catfish.
- Fish Cleaning Stations:** Fish cleaning stations were constructed at Mazurik (Marblehead), Huron, and Avon Lake accesses through Division of Wildlife projects (Mazurik) or community grants (Huron and Avon Lake) to improve the fishing experience for anglers visiting Lake Erie.
- Acton Lake Fishing Pier:** A new fishing pier was constructed at Acton Lake to improve shore fishing opportunities.
- Ohio Fisheries Information System:** Revisions and updates of the Ohio Fisheries Information System, a centralized database that houses statewide fisheries assessment and management data, were completed. Historical Lake Erie fisheries data was added.
- Hatchery Open Houses:** Public open houses were held at the six state fish hatcheries where more than 40 million cold-water, cool-water, and warm-water fish are raised annually.
- Shooting Range Improvements:** Completed improvements to Indian Creek Wildlife Area Shooting Range with the addition of a composting restroom, and the first phase of renovations to Tranquility Wildlife Area Shooting Range. Kiosks were constructed and a range check-in process was developed for both ranges.



CONSERVING HABITAT

2023 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Habitat Conservation:** Acquired 508 acres at Woodland Trails Wildlife Area in Preble County, 844 acres at Simco Wildlife Area in Coshocton County, and 63 acres of grassland at Big Island Wildlife Area in Marion County. The Division of Wildlife partnered with Ducks Unlimited to protect a wetland complex adjacent to Moxley Wildlife Area, resulting in the addition of 209 acres of marsh in Erie County. Additionally, the family of Marion and Fred Conkel donated 178 acres to create a new wildlife area in Pike County.
- **Trophy Fisheries:** In response to angler interest in trophy catfish fisheries, blue catfish stocking was expanded to include Alum Creek, Atwood, and West Branch reservoirs, bringing the total number of reservoirs stocked with these fish to nine.
- **Ruffed Grouse Habitat Modeling:** Empirically based landscape and site-level models of ruffed grouse habitat suitability across southern Ohio and on three potential grouse focal areas were implemented. Three additional ruffed grouse focus areas were identified for future work.
- **OLHAP:** Nearly 20,000 acres have been enrolled in the Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access Partnership, providing funding to landowners who allow hunting access and connecting hunters with additional places to hunt.
- **Pheasant Surveys:** Ring-necked pheasants were detected at two new locations during call survey routes. The occurrence and density of pheasants in Ohio is positively associated with CRP land, highlighting the value of this program.
- **Infrastructure Repair:** Infrastructure repair projects were initiated for lakefront levee repair at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area and renovations at Little Portage Wildlife Area. These projects will be completed in 2024.
- **Upland Habitat Management:** Staff identified 3,445 individual upland fields using imagery and outlined upland habitats requiring management every third year. This year, staff planned management in 1,783 upland fields and reported 835 management accomplishments.
- **Wildlife Management Consultants:** Nine new wildlife management consultants were hired to provide wildlife habitat technical assistance on private and public lands and a training program for new and existing wildlife management consultants was initiated.
- **Wildlife Research Technicians:** Three new wildlife research technicians were hired to provide wildlife-human interaction technical guidance and information to homeowners in major urban and suburban areas.
- **Lake Erie Saildrone:** Division of Wildlife biologists collaborated with U.S. Geological Survey and Saildrone to collect fisheries data using a 23-foot autonomous vessel. The solar-powered drone collected data across Lake Erie over several months. The experiment will allow biologists to better understand vessel impacts on fish survey data and refine estimates of forage fish abundance.
- **Fish Kill Investigation:** Conducted a fish kill investigation in response to the train derailment in East Palestine. Wildlife personnel and officers responded to survey the waterways to determine the impact of the chemical spill on aquatic life in conjunction with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and an environmental consulting firm. A total of 2,938 aquatic species were identified as having been directly impacted.
- **H2Ohio WQIP:** The Division of Wildlife provided H2Ohio Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP) payments on 60 wetland projects totaling 1,204 acres and more than \$2.4 million as part of the USDA Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). WQIP was also expanded to the Scioto River CREP in 2023.





SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

KILLDEER PLAINS WILDLIFE AREA

2023 FEATURED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Eastern Hellbender Release:** An additional 182 captive-reared hellbenders were released at three locations, bringing the total number of animals released to 1,806 at 26 sites in 10 watersheds. A hellbender nest monitored through the fall resulted in the first documented wild hatching of eastern hellbenders in Ohio.
- **Deer Management Survey:** Nearly 25,000 deer hunters and 11,000 landowners were invited to participate in our deer management goal-setting surveys. Results will be used to guide deer management decisions for the next three to five years.
- **Turkey Research:** Wild turkey telemetry research in conjunction with Ohio State University was launched to better understand hen survival and nest success. In the first year, 49 hens in southeast Ohio were monitored, with plans to monitor 100 additional hens in 2024.
- **Trumpeter Swan Recovery:** After a decade of conservation and monitoring, the trumpeter swan has increased in abundance and meets the criteria to be removed from Ohio's endangered species list, as outlined in the 2010 Ohio Swan Management Plan.
- **Allegheny Woodrats:** This year was a milestone for Ohio's Allegheny woodrat population along the Ohio River. Nine woodrats were relocated from Virginia and released to boost the genetic diversity of Ohio's dwindling population.
- **Injurious Aquatic Invasive Species:** Red swamp crayfish, Alabama bass, and Florida bass were added to the Injurious Aquatic Invasive Species list to further protect native populations.
- **Mudpuppy Research:** A mudpuppy distribution and status project was completed by The Ohio State University through a grant from the Division of Wildlife. The project provided an update on the status of mudpuppies in Ohio and insights regarding management practices in Lake Erie tributaries where mudpuppies are found.
- **Yellow Perch Research:** The Division of Wildlife and research partners at The Ohio State University completed a project researching changing yellow perch distributions in Lake Erie's central basin. This project expanded our understanding of yellow perch distribution in relation to hypoxia and prey resources, informing perspectives on fish behavior, population performance, and angler success.
- **Coyote Research:** A website about coyote research was developed and launched to combat misinformation. The research group collected samples for analysis. The data helped determine age, annual survival, and litter size of the Ohio coyote population. Preliminary results were shared and connections made with hunters, trappers, and producers.
- **Sandhill Crane Monitoring:** In collaboration with the International Crane Foundation and the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, the Division of Wildlife coordinated a community sandhill crane count in April. More than 350 cranes were documented across 24 counties.
- **Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative:** Coordinated a statewide urban bird conservation program to reduce migratory bird mortality. During fiscal year 2023, five new buildings in Ohio's cities were enrolled in the program, and glass remediation began on government buildings in Cuyahoga County. Collision surveys operated by partners in Cleveland and Columbus salvaged 3,523 birds.
- **Walleye Theft:** Concluded a walleye donation theft case. After an investigation uncovered that 112 walleyes, one steelhead, one yellow perch, and three whitefish were stolen, five defendants pleaded guilty. The defendants are scheduled to pay \$24,120 in restitution to the charitable organization set to receive the stolen fish, and another \$13,000 in restitution to the Division of Wildlife. The commercial fish processor business will have its license suspended for 30 days.



STAFF COMMITMENT

HELLBENDER RELEASE

2024 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Conservation Goals:** Update Ohio’s State Wildlife Action Plan in 2024-25, outlining statewide conservation goals for wildlife diversity over the next decade.
- **Search and Rescue:** Expansion of the Ohio Division of Wildlife’s Search, Rescue, and Tracking Team to include officers from each district and all K-9 handler teams. This team serves to enhance the division’s ability to locate lost individuals, those in physical distress in the outdoors, and those wanted for criminal apprehension purposes.
- **Hunting Guide License:** Creation of a Hunting Guide License along with an Outfitters Accreditation Program where outfitters can voluntarily sign up. The division will provide customers with a list of accredited outfitters. This will promote those businesses as well as protect our customers from theft and fraud.
- **Ginseng Records:** Expand the electronic web-based reporting for ginseng dealer records to all Ohio ginseng dealers as the new method of required records reporting.
- **Women Officers of Wildlife:** Continue to provide the ability of the Women Officers of Wildlife group to collaborate with agency personnel to hold regular discussions regarding topics unique to women officers in ODNR and to address the current and future needs of wildlife officers that the group identifies.
- **Fish Ohio Records:** Make Fish Ohio catch application records available on the Innovate Ohio DataOhio Portal through a visualization that filters historical catch records.
- **K-2 Field Guide:** Print and distribute the kindergarten through second grade field guide booklet to highlight common Ohio wildlife species, as well as serve as a non-fiction text for these grade levels. A field test was completed and the final product will be available in the spring.
- **Economic Evaluation of Fisheries:** Complete a survey of patterns in angler behavior and associated expenditures in Ohio in collaboration with The Ohio State University. The results will inform understandings of demands for fishing, the economic value of sport fisheries, and angler perspectives on the value of our fisheries.
- **Angler Summits:** Host two angler summits, one with representatives of muskie clubs and the other with representatives of catfish clubs and tournament circuits, to discuss the status of these fisheries and fisheries management practices, exchange ideas, and answer questions.
- **Grant Platform:** Develop an online grant management system that is user-friendly and allows grantees to easily manage their user profiles, grant applications, and final reports. This platform directly links proposed and completed activities to efficiently report how these grants are meeting project goals and tracks volunteer hours.
- **Dragonflies and Damselflies:** Publish *A Naturalist’s Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio* in collaboration with the Ohio Biological Survey. This will culminate a four-year statewide survey of odonates conducted through The Ohio State University, and was supported by State Wildlife Grant dollars.



UPGRADED FACILITIES

APPALACHIAN HILLS WILDLIFE AREA

2024 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **London State Fish Hatchery Improvements:** Continue construction on a \$1.2 million improvement project at London State Fish Hatchery to improve water supplies and upgrade the production building. News display pools were built in 2023. London State Fish Hatchery produces brown trout, rainbow trout, and muskellunge.
- **Fairport Harbor Access Area:** Support the Lake (County) Development Authority in constructing the first phase of a multi-year project to improve the fishing and boating access facility at Fairport Harbor through a grant from the Division of Wildlife.
- **Shoreline Fishing Piers:** Replace and repair ADA-compliant fishing piers at Cowan, Knox, Mogadore, Tycoon, and Oxbow lakes, and Metzger Marsh and Magee Marsh wildlife areas.
- **Alum Creek Boat Ramps:** Renovate the Cheshire Road and Alum Creek State Park boat ramps and access facilities through a partnership between the Division of Parks & Watercraft and the Division of Wildlife. The project is anticipated to be completed in 2025.
- **Steubenville Boat Access:** Complete a project feasibility study for the Steubenville Marina boat access area to identify areas of improvement.
- **Shreve Lake Dam Renovation:** Complete renovation of the Shreve Lake Dam. The 60-acre lake is anticipated to reach full pool depths during 2025 and will restore local opportunities for catching large-mouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, and other fish species.
- **Future Range Expansion:** Assist the Division of Parks and Watercraft with the construction of eight new public archery ranges and explore partnerships for public archery ranges around the state.
- **Grand River Range:** The Grand River Wildlife Area Shooting Range improvement project is slated to begin in the spring of 2024. A new range master building and a new outdoor education center will increase safety and provide a location for classes. Improvements include new shooting benches and a covered shooting line, ADA-compliant sidewalks, new berms, and a new backstop.
- **Visitor Center Construction:** Begin construction on new visitor centers at Appalachian Hills Wildlife Area and Put-in-Bay. The new Appalachian Hills Visitor Center will showcase southeast Ohio's splendor, while turning a fish hatchery into the Put-in-Bay Aquatic Visitor Center will bring focus to Lake Erie's world-class fisheries. Both projects will be completed in 2025.

CONSERVING HABITAT

LITTLE MIAMI RIVER

2024 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- Southwest Ohio Conservation:** Create a new Miami Rivers Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in the Great Miami and Little Miami watersheds in southwest Ohio to improve water quality and wildlife habitat, prevent flooding, and protect soil.
- Medina County Aquatic Invasive Species Project:** Complete the first phase of an Aquatic Invasive Species barrier project on Little Killbuck Creek, preventing the movement of invasive carp between the Lake Erie and Ohio River watersheds.
- H2Ohio Rivers Conservation:** Leverage funding from Governor DeWine's \$47 million investment in the H2Ohio Rivers initiative to improve and maintain the health of the state's rivers. This will include creating a new Miami Rivers Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in the Great Miami and Little Miami watersheds in southwest Ohio to improve water quality and wildlife habitat, prevent flooding, and protect soil. In addition, partners will conduct a comprehensive study of freshwater mussels to gauge the ecologic condition of Ohio's rivers.
- Steelhead Stocking in the Cuyahoga River:** Add the Cuyahoga River to the Lake Erie tributaries stocked with steelhead trout each spring. The addition of this tributary will expand opportunities and distribute fishing pressure for this world class fishery.
- Piping Plover Nesting Habitat:** Increase monitoring of suitable nesting habitat for piping plovers during late May and early June to detect and protect nests. The successful nesting of a piping plover pair at Maumee Bay State Park in 2021, along with restoration efforts in critical habitat areas such as Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve, makes it possible for additional plover pairs to nest in Ohio in future years.
- Conservation Planning:** Implement new technology for use in operational planning for both habitat and recreation projects. The software is being designed to increase transparency in planning and reporting accomplishments and provide data on how much work should be planned and accomplished to maintain habitat on wildlife areas.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

BALD EAGLE

2024 FOCUSED INITIATIVES

- **Lake Sturgeon Reintroduction:** The inaugural stocking of lake sturgeon in the Cuyahoga River is planned in the fall of 2024 in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
- **Mussel Research:** Expand mussel repatriation through in-vitro fertilization to further restore and protect Ohio's diversity of freshwater mussels. The Watters Aquatic Conservation Center at the Columbus Zoo was renovated in 2023.
- **Evaluation of Ohio River Catfish:** Evaluate the movement of trophy-sized blue catfish and flathead catfish in the Ohio River. Large catfish were implanted with acoustic tags between 2014 and 2017 and fish were tracked through a river-wide acoustic receiver array to monitor movement. The results will facilitate inter-agency management of these species and address angler concerns regarding population declines in the Greenup, Meldahl, and Markland pools.
- **Black Bass Research:** Complete a research project through The Ohio State University to explore how environmental and genetic factors influence largemouth bass population size and age structure, growth, and recruitment. The results will inform management options and help set angler expectations regarding fisheries performance within specific waters.
- **Brook Trout Management Plan:** Work with the Geauga Park District and other key partners to complete a brook trout management plan. The plan will provide a background and situation analysis and identify measures to protect existing populations of native Ohio brook trout within the Ashtabula, Chagrin, Conneaut, and Grand rivers and their tributaries. Brook trout are listed as state endangered.
- **Fish Stocking:** Produce and stock more than 40 million sport fish of 11 different species in public waters through the six state fish hatcheries.
- **Nuisance Wild Animal Manual:** Update the Commercial Nuisance Wild Animal Control Operator certification manual along with the associated certification test.
- **Black Bear Research:** Capture female black bears in eastern Ohio to monitor their movements via radio collars. This is part of an effort to learn more about the state's expanding black bear population and gather information on the range, habitat use, and reproduction of female bears.
- **Ruffed Grouse Study:** Conduct a study on ruffed grouse in the state to better understand the declining population. The study will identify opportunities and recommend habitat conservation strategies that will sustain viable populations on focal areas where habitat can be managed.
- **Upland Game Bird Monitoring:** Implement passive sensing technology such as cellular trail cameras and automated recording units in monitoring efforts for ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, and ring-necked pheasants. This monitoring information will be combined with work being conducted by research faculty and graduate students from The Ohio State University.
- **Allegheny Woodrat Restoration:** Continue efforts to restore the woodrat population by introducing individuals from populations outside Ohio and explore the potential for a captive breeding population to increase genetic diversity and augment existing subpopulations. In addition, baiting to control the occurrence of raccoon roundworm will continue.
- **Bald Eagles:** Monitor bald eagle populations and nest success rates to evaluate impacts of highly pathogenic avian influenza, which has resulted in mortalities since the spring of 2022. Further studies will help understand the impact of this disease on eagles and may act as an indicator of the impact on other avian species not as easily monitored.
- **Citizen Science Monitoring of Sandhill Cranes:** Maintain efforts to monitor breeding sandhill crane populations through the Midwest Crane Count. This citizen science survey provides valuable information about sandhill cranes, which remain on the state's threatened species list. It also engages the wildlife-watching public and highlights the agency's commitment to species of greatest conservation need.
- **Wildlife Disease Surveillance:** Maintain and revise disease response plans by continuing wildlife surveillance efforts and participating in state, regional, and national disease working groups. These groups allow Division of Wildlife staff to remain at the forefront of emerging wildlife disease issues.
- **Lake Erie Research Vessel:** Begin constructing a new Lake Erie fisheries research vessel. The new 55-foot boat will be used to conduct fisheries surveys in the western basin.