

Wild Ohio for Kids

2004

M A G A Z I N E

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE





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Home is Where the Habitat Is

Habitat is the place where a wild animal lives—its home. All good habitat provides wildlife with the four major things they need to survive: food, water, shelter, and space. Many animals are specially suited to a certain kind of habitat. Some of the different kinds of wildlife habitat found in Ohio are wetlands, prairies, and forests. Even your own backyard can be good wildlife habitat if you make it so.

Look in this issue of *Wild Ohio for Kids* for stories and activities to explore these important habitats and learn about the Ohio wildlife that live there.



**Welcome to
Ohio's Forests**
page 3

**What Good
are Wetlands?**
page 8



On the cover:
a Northern leopard frog
leaping into a pond.

Little Home on the Prairie page 12



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Hey There WILD Kids! Welcome to Ohio's Forests!

Ohio has some of the best forest habitat in the Midwest. But it wasn't always that way. More than 100 years ago, Ohio lost almost 75 percent of its forested lands due to farming and surface mining (removing coal from the surface of the land). This was before settlers realized that the land they had cleared would not be suitable for farming. And now that surface mining is not as common, the great forested lands of Ohio are making a huge comeback.

Along with the recovery of this wonderful habitat, comes the recovery of the animals that live there. When habitat is destroyed, the animals that live there no longer have a home. These animals either die out or move



to better habitat. The good thing is that when the habitat comes back, so do many of the animals. Ohio has seen the recovery of a number of different forest animals such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, barred owl, wood thrush, pileated woodpecker, red-shouldered hawk, and American burying beetle. Over the last 10 years, the American black bear has begun to return to Ohio. So come explore the next several pages of *Wild Ohio for Kids* and learn all about Ohio's forests!

Forest Habitat Components

In a forest, there are generally three categories of animals: **predators**, **prey**, and **decomposers**. Predators are animals that eat other animals. Prey animals are the ones that get eaten. So what do prey animals eat? Most prey animals are plant eaters. However, don't forget that larger predators will feed on smaller predators if given the chance.

So what are decomposers? All animals die at some point. Decomposers eat dead animals. This may sound gross, but without decomposers, we would be up to our necks in dead stuff! Yuck! Which animals eat what in a forest?



Forest Levels

Forests have different levels: **high canopy**, **understory**, **shrub**, and **forest floor**. Animals use all of the different levels for different things. Look at the pictures and the information on the cards on pages 5 and 6. Then draw some animals in their appropriate levels of the forest in the drawing on page 4. There could be more than one animal for each level.

Predator-Prey Web

When you finish your drawing on page 4, see how many food chains you can make using the information on the back of the cards (page 5 and 6). Draw lines between the animal and what it would eat. What do you call it when you have many food chains together? A food web!

Forest Level Types

High Canopy – Some animals build their nests high up in the tops of the trees to try to avoid predators that would steal their eggs. (great horned owl, turkey vulture)

Understory – This is the level just below the high canopy. It includes smaller trees and the lower branches of tall trees. Many animals use this level to roost or sleep at night to ensure they are safely off the ground and away from predators. Some animals use this level as a perch to spy on prey animals on the forest floor. (great horned owl, wild turkey, raccoon, humans)

Shrub – Many animals use the shrubby plants at this level for food, nesting places, and hiding spots. (ruffed grouse, raccoon, white-tailed deer, wild turkey)

Forest Floor – Many animals find food such as insects, dead animals, grass, and leaves on the forest floor. Some animals dig their dens under the forest floor and others nest on the ground. (wild turkey, ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, raccoon)





Eastern cottontail rabbit

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats small trees, grass, flowers, and leaves.

Forest Levels: Uses shrubs for cover and food.

Wild turkey

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats insects and acorns.

Forest Levels: Nests on the forest floor; roosts overnight in higher portions of the understory.

Raccoon

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats birds' eggs (turkey, grouse, turkey vulture, and other birds' eggs), and insects.

Forest Levels: Uses dead trees as dens; naps on understory branches; can be found using all levels of the forest.

American burying beetle

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats any dead animal or plant.

Forest Levels: Found throughout the forest floor.

Great horned owl

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats rabbits, grouse, raccoon, rodents, and young turkeys.

Forest Levels: Nests high in the trees, using old crow or abandoned hawk nests. Will perch on branches to spy prey on the forest floor.

White-tailed deer

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats grass, acorns, and apples.

Forest Levels: Uses shrubs for cover and food.

Turkey vulture

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats any dead animal.

Forest Levels: Nests on the ground or in a tree cavity.

Young person hunting

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, rabbit, and wild turkey.

Forest Levels: Uses the forest floor, but can also climb to the understory.

Ruffed grouse

Predator-Prey Web:

Eats buds, seeds, and insects.

Forest Levels: Uses shrubs for cover and food; nests on the ground in dense shrubby cover.

Camouflage for Wildlife

Camouflage means to blend into the background. Animals are colored to blend into their surroundings. Hunters wear camouflage clothing to blend into the habitat. See if you can find the things hidden in this picture.

raccoon tail
acorn
hunting license
2 turtle shells
5 shotgun shells
2 knives
3 deer antlers
2 arrows
Bonus: owl



What Good Are Wetlands?

Let me tell you...

What is a wetland you ask? A wetland is a “wet land.” Sometimes wetlands dry up in the summer, but they are still important areas. There are many kinds of wetlands including swamps, marshes, bogs, and fens. What these areas have in common is what defines them as wetlands: water, special soils, and specialized plants. (Have you ever seen a cattail growing anywhere but in a wet area?)

Okay, so now that we know what a wetland is, let’s get back to the original question: **What good are wetlands?** Take a look...

Flood Control

Wetlands act as “giant sponges”- they catch, store, and slowly release excess water. They are a natural, free way to control floods!

Filter Pollutants

Do you know how a coffee filter works? The plants in wetlands help to filter sediment and other pollutants. So the water coming out of a wetland is cleaner than the water flowing in!

Home For Wildlife

Many migratory birds use wetlands as “giant rest areas”— places to stop, refuel energy, and rest before continuing on their journey. Also, wetlands are nature’s nurseries because many species, like frogs and salamanders, rails, and egrets, spend their earliest days in the protection of wetlands before moving on to other habitats or open water.

Endangered Species

Almost half of all endangered species depend on wetlands for their survival. So when you visit a wetland habitat, you may see a bald eagle or a trumpeter swan!



Visit a Wetland Near You

Wetlands are cool places to visit and there is probably one near you. Below are just a few wetlands managed by the Division of Wildlife that you might want to check out. When visiting a wetland, use the wetland record sheet to record what you find on your wetland exploration.

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area (Ottawa County)
Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area (Sandusky County)
Grand River Wildlife Area (Trumbull County)
Spring Valley Wildlife Area (Greene County)
Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area (Wayne & Holmes Counties)
Big Island Wildlife Area (Marion County)

You can get maps for these and other wildlife areas at the Division of Wildlife’s Web site at www.ohiodnr.com/wildlife.

Wetland Record Sheet



Wetland: _____

Location: _____

Observer: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Weather: _____

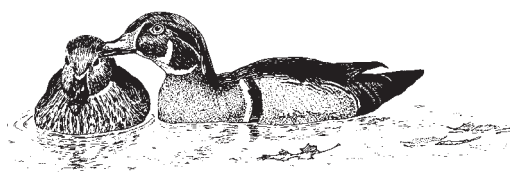
Water Depth Point A: _____ Water Depth Point B: _____

Soil: (How does it feel? What color is it? How does it smell?)

Animals and signs of animals: _____

Changes from last visit:

(Draw a map or picture here.)



Wetland Wildlife Word Find

Many animals live in wetlands. Acre for acre, wetlands support more species of wildlife than any other habitat. Can you find **10** animals listed in the puzzle below? The words can be up, down, diagonal, or backwards. Draw a line around each animal name when you find it.

E	A	S	W	A	N	E	F	T
R	K	C	U	D	A	T	I	U
E	F	O	M	G	S	A	S	M
D	O	E	L	U	O	Y	H	M
N	S	E	U	N	E	R	B	R
A	T	U	R	T	L	E	F	E
M	R	M	S	E	I	V	B	V
A	C	C	K	O	H	Z	D	A
L	W	A	O	T	T	E	R	E
A	N	W	I	P	V	D	F	B
S	O	G	K	C	U	D	Y	E

BEAVER

DUCK

EAGLE

FISH

FROG

OTTER

SALAMANDER

SNAKE

SWAN

TURTLE



BEAVER



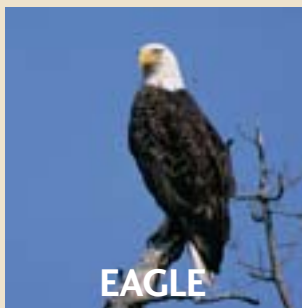
SNAKE



SWAN



FISH



EAGLE



SALAMANDER



DUCK



OTTER



TURTLE



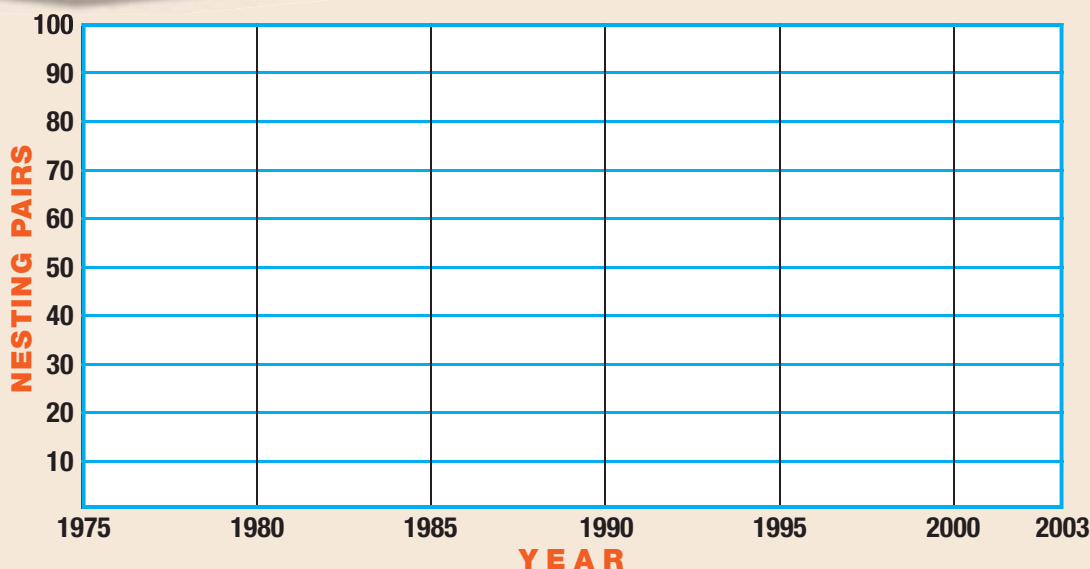
FROG

Bald Eagles Soaring High in Ohio

Bald eagles need wetlands to survive. At one time only a few bald eagles remained in Ohio, partly due to loss of wetland habitat and the misuse of pesticides in the environment. Today bald eagles are soaring once again in the Buckeye State. Use the numbers and graph below to plot the increase in bald eagles in Ohio.

Nesting Pairs of Bald Eagles

Year	Nesting Pairs of Bald Eagles
19754
19805
19857
199016
199529
200063
200388



Wetland Plants

How well do you know wetland plants? Match the picture with the names below. Good luck and have fun! The answers are at the bottom of the page.



A



B



C



D



E

1. swamp milkweed____ 2. arrowhead____ 3. American lotus____
4. marsh mallow____ 5. cattail____

Answers to Wetlands Plants: 1-D, 2-A, 3-E, 4-C, 5-B.

Little Home on the Prairie

When European settlers first came to the Ohio Country, the landscape was mostly forest, along with some areas of prairies and wetlands.

Prairies are made up of grasses and colorful **wildflowers**. When the first settlers found the prairies, they were not used to seeing this kind of habitat. The pioneers came from Europe and the eastern United States (the 13 Original Colonies), which were mostly forests. At that time there was no word in their English language to describe this grassy habitat, so they used the word "**prairie**," which is the French word for "**meadow**."



Pioneer cemetery remnant prairie

Native Americans and pioneers. The pioneers continued to change the bison's grassland **habitat** until there were no more bison left in the state.

Few original prairies remain, but similar unmowed grassy habitat exists across modern-day Ohio, often on **farmlands**. The grasses of grasslands and prairies provide valuable food, cover, and nesting areas for many of Ohio's wildlife that are specially suited for this habitat. The **grasses** and wildflowers attract **songbirds**, hummingbirds, and insects like bees, grasshoppers, beetles, **butterflies**, and moths. Some of the birds that live on Ohio prairies and grasslands are the red-tailed hawk, short-eared owl, Eastern meadowlark, horned lark, bobolink, ring-necked pheasant, and bobwhite **quail**.

Butterflies, like the monarch, tiger swallowtail, Eastern tailed blue, and American copper, depend on nectar from the many varieties of wildflowers that bloom on the prairie in the summer.

Because there are few trees, some prairie and grassland animals make their homes in dens or underground burrows. These are called **burrowing** wildlife. Bumble bees, red foxes, **coyotes**, **badgers**, Eastern cottontail rabbits, meadow voles, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, and some reptiles like the Eastern plains garter snake spend part of the time underneath the prairie.

Besides forests and wetlands, prairies and grasslands make up yet another habitat that is important to keeping Ohio wildlife here to stay.

Just like the forests and wetlands, prairie habitat was changed or destroyed as the pioneers settled the land. The few prairies that remain in Ohio today are mostly found in the western half of the state. Some of these areas are pioneer cemeteries that were left untouched by farming or development of cities.

The main reason animals become **endangered** is because their habitat is gone. (Endangered means that the animal is found only in low numbers.) Some of Ohio's original prairie wildlife, like bison, are completely gone from the state. **Bison**, also called buffalo, could measure six feet tall at the shoulder and weigh almost a ton (2,000 pounds.) These huge animals provided food and clothing for the



Grassland Wildlife

Crossword Puzzle

Refer to the story "Little Home on the Prairie" on page 12 for clues to the answers for the crossword.



Across

6. Grassy habitat similar to prairies is often found on _____.
11. When an animal species is found only in low numbers, it is _____.
12. The French word for meadow is _____.
13. The grasses and wildflowers of prairies attract hummingbirds, butterflies, insects, and _____.
14. _____ depend on nectar from the blooming wildflowers on prairies.

Down

1. Prairies are made up of grasses and colorful _____.
2. These prairie and grassland animals, _____, are known for their nighttime howls.
3. The _____ of prairies and grasslands provide valuable food, cover, and nesting areas for many wildlife species.
4. Once native to Ohio, _____ are often referred to as buffalo.
5. Although not often seen in Ohio, the _____ is recognized by the stripes on its face.
7. The _____ vole spends much of its time underground on the prairie.
8. The _____ is recognized by its call that sounds like it is saying "bobwhite!"
9. Grassland animals that make their homes in dens or underground are called _____ wildlife.
10. Besides forests and wetlands, prairies and grasslands are important _____ for keeping Ohio's grassland wildlife here to stay.



Across: 6. farmlands; 11. endangered; 12. prairie;
13. songbirds; 14. butterflies.
Down: 1. wildflowers; 2. coyotes; 3. grasses;
4. bison; 5. badger; 7. meadow; 8. quail;
9. burrowing; 10. habitat.

Write a Prairie Story

Pretend you are one of the early pioneers looking for a new place to make your home. You have traveled from the east and have now reached the Ohio Country. Before you lies a sea of wild grass and flowering herbs. Write a story about your journey, what you see (habitat and wildlife), and how you plan to settle in the area. You can also add sketches along the page border if you want. And don't forget to write a title for your story.

Prairie Story Title:

By:

Map Activity: Find a Prairie Near You

Color or highlight the county where you live on the state map below. Using a pen or pencil, make a dot on the map to show approximately where the city is located in which you live (or the closest city to where you live.) The green areas on the state map show where most of Ohio's prairies were located when the first settlers came. Do you live in the area that once contained Ohio's original prairies?

Below is a list of special areas managed by the state of Ohio (Ohio Department of Natural Resources) or other agencies to help protect what is left of Ohio's prairie habitat. Using a different color than the color you used to mark the county where you live, color or highlight the county where each of these prairie areas are located. Are any of these areas located close to where you live?

Prairie	County Location
Aullwood Audubon Center	Montgomery County
Bigelow Cemetery and Smith Cemetery	
State Nature Preserves	Madison County
Buck Creek State Park Prairie	Clark County
Caesar Creek State Park Prairie	Warren County
Chaparral Prairie State Nature Preserve	Adams County
Compass Plant Prairie State Nature Preserve	Lawrence County
Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area	Wyandot County
Kitty Todd State Nature Preserve	Lucas County
Milford Center Railroad Prairie State Nature Preserve ...	Union County
Resthaven Wildlife Area	Erie County



compass plant



prairie blazingstar



black-eyed susan



painted lady on purple coneflower

Backyards for Wildlife

Some backyards make better wildlife habitat than others depending on how much food, water, shelter, and space are provided. Your yard as a whole provides the space for wildlife. You can add things to your yard to provide food, water, and shelter. Pictured below are some of the things that can help make good wildlife habitat.

First, beside each drawing, circle the survival needs each backyard item might provide for wildlife (**food, water, or shelter**). Some may provide more than one habitat need.

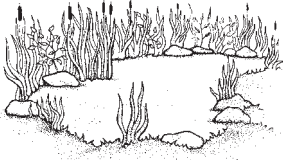
Next, in the spaces below each of these backyard items, write in the wildlife that these items might attract. (A list of backyard wildlife is provided to help you fill in the blanks.) Then draw some of your favorite wildlife in the picture on page 17.

Backyard Wildlife

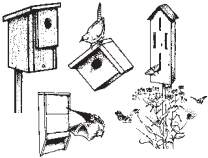
Birds
Bats
Bees
Beetles
Butterflies
Caterpillars
Cottontail rabbits
Dragonflies
Frogs and Toads
Grasshoppers
Praying mantises
Raccoons
Snakes
(garter and brown snakes)
Spiders
Squirrels



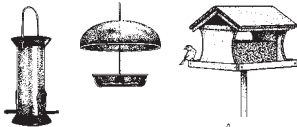
Bird bath (Food Water Shelter)



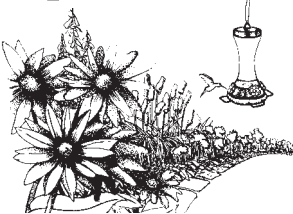
Small pond (Food Water Shelter)



Nest boxes (Food Water Shelter)



Bird feeders (Food Water Shelter)



Flower garden with hummingbird feeder (Food Water Shelter)



Brush pile (Food Water Shelter)



Rock pile or stone fence (Food Water Shelter)



Trees, shrubs, and dead snag (Food Water Shelter)



Answers for page 18, Backyard Birding 101: 10-ruby-throated hummingbird, 8-American goldfinch, 1-bluejay, 6-Northern cardinal, 9-downy woodpecker, 7-house finch, 2-chickadee, 4-mourning dove, 3-American robin, 5-tree swallow. Ohio's official state bird is the Northern cardinal.

Backyard Birding 101

Do you know the birds that live in or visit your neighborhood? Become a backyard birder and learn to identify the different birds in your yard. Identify the birds pictured below by writing the number on its picture next to its name. You may want to use a field guide (bird identification guide).

- _____ • **ruby-throated hummingbird**
- _____ • **American goldfinch**
- _____ • **blue jay**
- _____ • **Northern cardinal**
- _____ • **downy woodpecker**
- _____ • **house finch**
- _____ • **chickadee**
- _____ • **mourning dove**
- _____ • **American robin**
- _____ • **tree swallow**

Answers on
page 17



Do you know which bird is Ohio's official state bird?

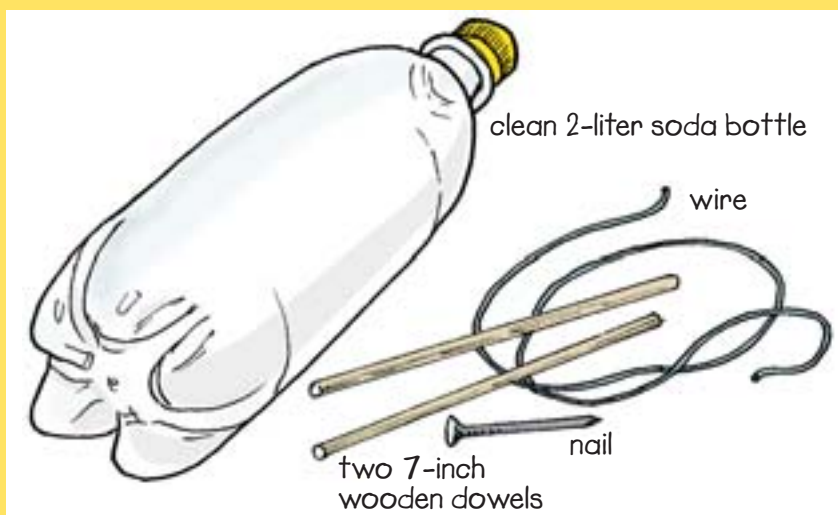
Make Your Own Bird Feeders

A recent survey showed that 52 million Americans feed the birds in their backyards and spend about \$3 billion a year on birdseed and other bird feeding items like bird feeders, bird baths, and bird houses. That's a lot! You can make your own bird feeders and enjoy feeding and watching the birds in your backyard too. Here's how.

Two-Liter Bird Feeder

Materials:

- a two-liter plastic soda pop bottle (*emptied and cleaned*)
- 2 seven-inch wooden dowel rods
- nail
- wire for hanging the feeder



Get an adult to help you make the feeder. Start by holding the plastic bottle with the cap down. About four inches from the cap, use the nail to poke a hole in the bottle large enough for one of the wooden rods to go through. Do the same on the opposite side. Push the rod through both holes. The rod should stick out on either side as a perch. Make two more holes for a second set of perches closer to the bottom of the bottle. Only this time, put the holes on opposite sides of the bottle from the first holes. About an inch above each perch make a smaller hole. This is where the birds will get the seeds.

About an inch from the bottom of the bottle, make two final holes across from each other. Run wire through these holes, leaving enough wire to hang the feeder on a post or from a tree limb. To fill the feeder, unscrew the cap, fill the bottle with birdseed (a funnel will make this easier), and screw the cap back on. Flip the bottle upside down quickly to avoid losing birdseed. Hang up the feeder in your yard and have fun watching your backyard birds feed at your feeder.





Take Me Fishing!

Take me fishing.
Because my wedding will
be sooner than you think.

Take me fishing.
And show me that worms
really aren't that icky.

Take me fishing.
You can think about
work later.

Take me fishing.
Because I get the giggles
when the boat bounces.

Take me fishing.
Because my wedding will
be sooner than you think.

Water works wonders

FOR FISHING, BOATING, AND
THE ENVIRONMENT



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Division of Wildlife
1840 Belcher Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43224-1300



**EXPLORE
science.
discover
FUN!**



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