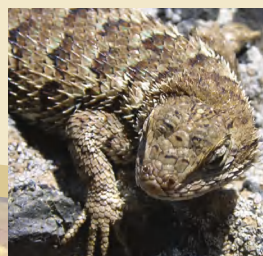
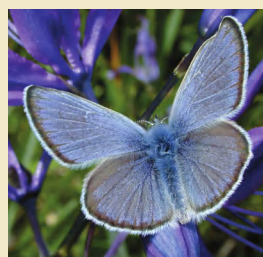


the OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Oregon
Department of
Fish and Wildlife
February 2006

the OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY

February 2006

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Contact Information

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
3406 Cherry Avenue, NE
Salem, Oregon 97303-4924
Web: www.dfw.state.or.us

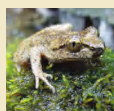
Recommended Citation

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2005. Oregon Conservation Strategy. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Salem, Oregon.

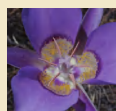
Project Funding

Funding for the development of the Conservation Strategy was provided by: The Oregon Nongame Fund (Oregon Nongame Checkoff and donations); Oregon General Fund; Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program; and the State Wildlife Grant Program.

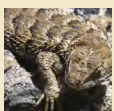
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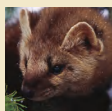
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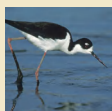
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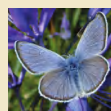
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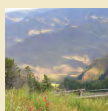
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FOREWORD

Photo © Ellen Morris Bishop (left) and Bruce Newhouse (right)

State and federal agencies, as well as other organizations, have developed and led many plans during the years to guide conservation of Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Most of these plans have focused on a particular species, area or natural resource. Although wildlife conservation often has been an implicit concern of these plans, many were developed primarily for other purposes.

With the creation of this Oregon Conservation Strategy, Oregon has its first overarching state strategy for conserving fish and wildlife.

The Conservation Strategy is an effort to use the best available science to create a broad vision and conceptual framework for long-term conservation of Oregon's native fish and wildlife, as well as various invertebrates and native plants. As a guide to conserving the species and habitats that have defined the nature of Oregon, this strategy can help ensure that Oregon's natural treasures are passed on to future generations. The Conservation Strategy emphasizes proactively conserving declining species and habitats to reduce the possibility of future federal or state listings. It is not a regulatory document, but instead presents issues and opportunities, and recommends voluntary actions that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation in Oregon.

Healthy fish and wildlife populations require adequate habitat, which is provided in natural systems and, for many species, in landscapes managed for forestry, agriculture, range and urban uses. The goals of the Conservation Strategy are to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing declines in these resources where possible. These goals fit well with ODFW's statutory obligation

to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

However, this is not a management plan for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Instead, it is a broad strategy for all of Oregon, offering potential roles and opportunities for residents, agencies and organizations. It incorporates information and insights from a broad range of natural resources assessments and conservation plans, supplemented by the professional expertise and practical experiences of a cross-section of Oregon's resource managers and conservation interests. It is designed to have a variety of applications both inside and outside of state government.

Most important, perhaps, it establishes the basis for a common understanding of the challenges facing Oregon's fish and wildlife, and provides a shared set of priorities for addressing the state's conservation needs. The heart of the Conservation Strategy is a blueprint for voluntary action to address the long-term needs of Oregon's fish and wildlife. The future for many species will depend on landowners' and land managers' willingness to voluntarily take action on their own to protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

The strategy outlined in this document considers fish and wildlife from a statewide perspective, establishing a broader context for decisions about the species and habitats in greatest need of conservation attention. It also recognizes that these issues vary in different regions, requiring conservation actions to be tailored to the unique needs of the fish, wildlife and human communities that coexist throughout Oregon. Much good work already is being done by private landowners, water-

Foreword

shed councils, conservation organizations and agencies like the many soil and water conservation districts. This strategy continues building on the solid foundation these groups have set for Oregon's conservation future.

This document is called a strategy, not a plan, because its purpose is to help people make decisions more strategically about how they can invest time and resources in fish and wildlife conservation. To that end, the Conservation Strategy focuses on a suite of species and habitats, many of them closely linked, that are in greatest need of conservation attention. The strategy provides guidance on the types of actions most likely to benefit these species and habitats, and describes a variety of non-regulatory programs that can help landowners and land managers with implementation.

For agencies and organizations working on a larger scale, the Conservation Strategy highlights specific geographic "Conservation Opportunity Areas" that provide good opportunities to address the conservation needs of high-priority habitats and species. These landscape-scale areas

include both public and private ownerships where targeted investments in conservation actions and incentives for private landowners are likely to generate the greatest long-term benefits for fish and wildlife.

The expanding footprint of human development and 150 years of landscape alteration have left much of Oregon's fish and wildlife at varying degrees of risk. For example, the song of Oregon's state bird, the western meadowlark, is rarely heard in the Willamette Valley any more. A grassland bird still common in eastern Oregon, the meadowlark is not going to be a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act any time soon. But the state bird is in trouble across a significant portion of its historic range in Oregon. Like most of Oregon's wildlife, it retains a natural resilience and will respond to improved habitat conditions. However, the meadowlark needs some conservation attention.

For the western meadowlark and dozens of other similarly vulnerable species including fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, invertebrates and plants, the Oregon Conservation Strategy offers hope for a more secure future.

Background and Purpose: *State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies and Oregon's Role*

Congress created a non-regulatory State Wildlife Grants Program to provide funding to states for proactive fish and wildlife conservation efforts. All 50 states are participating in the program. The goal of the program is to help maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations, thereby avoiding the costly and controversial regulations that accompany listing of species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Priority must be placed on two major categories: (1) species that are "low and declining" and (2) species that "are indicative of the diversity and health of wildlife of the state." To receive State Wildlife Grant funds, each state fish and wildlife agency must develop a "comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy" that contains eight elements addressing species, habitats, problems, conservation actions, monitoring, strategy review, interagency coordination, and public involvement. State strategies must be developed and submitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval by October 1, 2005.

All state strategies must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Guidance provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service directed states to consider wildlife in a broader sense that includes fish, amphib-

ians, reptiles, mammals, birds, and invertebrates such as butterflies. States were also encouraged to consider native plants. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency with statutory authority to manage fish and wildlife populations. Other state and federal agencies have jurisdiction over other resources. For example, Oregon Department of Agriculture manages native plant conservation and has responsibility for noxious weeds and insect pests. This Conservation Strategy is intended to be a broad framework for all of Oregon. Therefore, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has coordinated with many agencies in the development of this Conservation Strategy. Priority actions identified in the Conservation Strategy will require continued coordination to build partnerships across jurisdictions and management authorities.

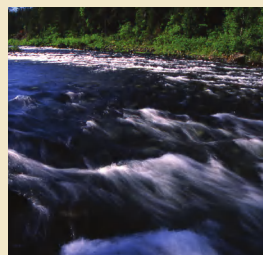


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Most readers will focus their attention on a particular topic, place, or concern addressed by this document, and perhaps find themselves drawn into a broader exploration.

For landowners and land managers who want to improve conditions for at-risk fish and wildlife, it provides a menu of conservation actions.

For agencies and organizations interested in making their conservation investments more effective and efficient, it is a blueprint for more strategic decision-making.

For citizens who value fish and wildlife, and the diversity of Oregon's natural world, it offers insights into complex issues and a doorway into a world where every person can contribute to conservation of Oregon's natural heritage.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife hopes you will participate in this exciting work that celebrates Oregon's heritage and shapes its conservation future.



Marla Rae
Chair, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Organization of this Document

SECTION A

Strategy for Action and First Steps

This is the heart of the Conservation Strategy. It describes a broad, strategic approach to the conservation issues facing Oregon. It highlights many large-scale actions that Oregonians can take to conserve fish and wildlife. It also describes how the Conservation Strategy can be implemented and explores some possible funding sources.

SECTION B

Stepping Down from Statewide to Local : Conservation Review and Technical Information

This provides a greater level of detail about key statewide conservation issues, Oregon's ecoregions, Strategy Habitats, and Strategy Species. The Statewide Perspectives and Approaches chapter also describes the Voluntary Conservation Tools available to landowners and the Conservation Strategy's approach to monitoring.

SECTION C

Supporting Information (Appendices)

This provides additional information in appendix form and includes a discussion of Oregon's existing planning and regulatory framework; a statewide list of Strategy Species; a summary of financial incentive programs for landowners; descriptions of the methods used to determine Strategy Species, Strategy Habitats and Conservation Opportunity Areas; and select references.

Acknowledgements

The Conservation Strategy would not have been possible without the assistance and guidance of many individuals, agencies, organizations and others who participated in this process.

We would like to express our appreciation to:

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Dick Bradbury, *Oregon Country Beef and eastern Oregon landowner*; Brett Brownscombe, *Hells Canyon Preservation Council*; Bobby Brunoe, *Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs*; Bruce Dixon, *Tourism Development Solutions*; Katie Fast, *Oregon Farm Bureau*; Ken Faulk, *Small Woodland Association*; Ron Hathaway, *OSU Extension Service*; Peter Kenagy, *NORPAC Foods, Inc. and western Oregon landowner*; Cathy Macdonald, *The Nature Conservancy*; Russ McKinley, Steve Mealey, *Boise Cascade*; Neal Maine, *North Coast Land Conservancy*; Jason Miner, *Oregon Trout*; Brad Nye, *Deschutes Basin Land Trust*; Joe Moll, Mike Running, *McKenzie River Trust*; Meryl Redisch, *Audubon Society of Portland*; Dennis Richey, *Oregon Anglers*; Gil Riddell, *Association of Oregon Counties*; Richard Schmitz, *Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society*; Kay Teisl, Kevin Westfall, Micah Wells, *Oregon Cattlemen's Association*; Tony Vecchio, *Oregon Zoo*; Sara Vickerman, *Defenders of Wildlife*; Dave Wiley, *Oregon Hunter's Association*; Ray Wilkeson, *Oregon Forest Industries Council*; Terry Witt, *Oregonians for Food and Shelter*; Brian Wolcott, *Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council*; Ron Yockim, *Douglas County*.

Technical Advisory Committee

John Alexander, *Klamath Bird Observatory*; Scott Black, *Xerces Society*; Bruce Coblentz, *OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife*; Char Corkran, *consulting ecologist*; Dave Eshbaugh, *Audubon Oregon*; Aaron Holmes, *Point Reyes Bird Observatory*; Matt Hunter, *consulting ecologist*; Larry Irwin, *National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Inc.*; Esther Lev, *The Wetlands Conservancy*; Dave Marshall, *consulting ecologist*; Bob Mason, *OSU Department of Zoology*; Andy Moldenke, *OSU Department of Botany and Plant Pathology*; Patricia Ormsbee, *U.S. Forest Service*; Bob Riggs, *Boise Cascade*; Mike Rochelle, *Weyerhaeuser, Inc.*; Al Smith, *consulting ecologist*; Bob Storm, *OSU Zoology (retired)*; Andy Warren, *OSU Department of Zoology graduate program*; Andrew Yost, *Oregon Department of Forestry*; Steve Zack, *Wildlife Conservation Society*.

ODFW staff

Ann Kreager, Ann Snyder, Bill Tinniswood, Bill Castillo, Bill Kinyoun, Bob Hooton, Brad Bales, Brad Wurfel, Brett Weidoff, Brian Ferry, Bruce Campbell, Bruce Eddy, Bruce McIntosh, Cedric Cooney, Charlie Bruce,

Charlie Corrarino, Chip Dale, Chris Carey, Chris Wheaton, Christian Hagen, Clair Kunkel, Clayton Barber, Colin Gillin, Craig Foster, Cristen Don, Cidney Howard, Darren Bruning, Dave Budeau, Dave Enfield, Dave Fox, Dave Loomis, DeWaine Jackson, Dick Caldwell, Don VandeBergh, Doug Cottam, Ed Bowles, George Keister, Glen Ardt, Harry Upton, Herman Biederbeck, Jeff Boechler, Jeff Rodgers, Jim Muck, Joe Sheahan, Jon Bowers, Jon Germond, Katie Thiel, Keith Braun, Keith Kohl, Kevin Blakely, Kevin Goodson, Kim Jones, Larry Cooper, Larry Pecenka, Liz Bueffel, Maggie Sommer, Mark Kirsch, Mark Nebeker, Marnie Albriten, Mary Hanson, Michael Arthur, Michael Pope, Mike Grey, Miriam Hulst, Nancy Breuner, Nancy Taylor, Pete Test, Randy Robart, Ray Perkins, Rick Boatner, Rick Kepler, Rick Klumph, Rod French, Roger Smith, Ron Anglin, Ron Garner, Rosemary Stussy, Russ Morgan, Stephanie Gunckel, Steve Denney, Steve Jacobs, Steve Marx, Steve Mamoyac, Steve Williams, Stuart Love, Sue Knapp, Susan Barnes, Tami Wagner, Tim Unterwegner, Tim Walters, Tina Edwards, Tod Lum, Todd Alsbury, Tom Collom, Tom Thornton, Tom Stahl, Tony Amandi, Tracy Hulett, Travis Aerni, Vic Coggins, Walt Van Dyke, Wendy Foltz, Will High.

Contractors and Sub-contractors

Bob Wheeler, Derek Van Marter, Ellen Blair, *Triangle Associates*; Bob Altman, *American Bird Conservancy*; Claudine Tobalske, Dennis Albert, Eleanor Gaines, Eric Scheuering, Jimmy Kagan, John Hak, Kuuipo Walsh, Sue Vrilakas, *OSU Institute for Natural Resources, Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center*; Chris Robbins, Dick Vander Schaaf, Ken Popper, *The Nature Conservancy*; Bob Meinke, Kelly Amsberry, Rebecca Currin, *Oregon Department of Agriculture*; Marcia Sinclair, *Consulting writer*.

Private Organizations and Private Citizens

Bobby Cochran, Bruce Taylor, Cheryl Hummon, Rick Brown, *Defenders of Wildlife*; Native Plant Society of Oregon; Bruce Newhouse, *Salix Associates*; Camille Reyes, Burgerville; Doug and Sharon Sinko, Myrtle Crest Dairy; Jack Shipley, *Applegate Partnership*; Jack Southworth, *Country Natural Beef*; Kristen Lambert, *Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust*; Mace Vaughn, *Xerces Society*; Mark Porter, Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Resources; Marko Bey, *Lomakatsi Restoration Project*; Mike Cloughesy, Leslie Lehman, *Oregon Forest Resources Institute*; Molly Gaines, *Haberman & Associates*; Peter Schoonmaker, Wayne Luscombe, *Illahee*; Scott Aycock, *Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council*; Stacy Davies, Roaring Springs Ranch; Steve Parrett, *Oregon Water Trust*; Tony Lasher, *The Resort at the Mountain*; Robert Gritsky, *Northwest Wildlife Consultants*; Fred Otley, *rancher*; Mark Knaupp, *farmer*; Pat Voigt, *rancher*; Craig Bizen, Darren Borgias, Debbie Pickering, Doug Kreuz, Jonathan Soll, Kyle Strauss, Mandy Tu, Phil Shepard, *The Nature Conservancy*.

Watershed Councils

Cyndy Coleman, *Harney Watershed Council*; Daniel Newberry, *Applegate River*; Marty King, *Umatilla Basin*; Jeff Oveson, *Grande Ronde Model Watershed*; Todd Miller, *Siuslaw Watershed Council*.

Partnerships

Oregon Invasive Species Council.

Cities and Counties

Claire Puchy, *City of Portland*; Eric Wold, *City of Eugene*; Gary Page, *Malheur County*; Janet Greenup, *Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District*; John Ferdinandsen, *Harney County*.

Native American Tribes

Mark Berry, Bobby Brunoe, Terry Luther, and Clay Penhollow, *Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs*; Howard Crombie, *Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw*; Mike Kennedy, *Confederated Tribes of Siletz*; Carl Scheeler, Todd Shaw, *Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation*.

State Agencies and Universities

Stephanie Page, Dan Hilburn, Kathleen Johnson, Nancy Osterbauer, Tim Butler, *Oregon Department of Agriculture*; Gary Lettman, Jennifer Weikel, Marcia Humes, Rick Wagner, *Oregon Department of Forestry*; Bobbi Riggers, Doug Terra, Greg Sieglitz, Ken Bierly, *Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board*; Dave DeSante, *The Institute for Bird Populations*; Elaine Hallmark, *Oregon Consensus Program*; Greg Wolf, *National Policy Consensus Center*; Jay Schleier, *Oregon Parks and Recreation Department*; Jared Rubin, Pete Dalke, *Oregon Department of Environmental Quality*; Mark Sytsma, Mary Pfauth, *Portland State University*; Jim Karr, *University of Washington*; Dave Ganskopp, Jon Bates, Roger Sheley, Tony Svejcar, *Eastern Oregon Agricultural Experimental Center*; Kim Travis, *Oregon Solutions*; Milt Hill, *Oregon Department of Transportation*; Monte Turner, *Division of State Lands*; Paul Adamus, Gary Ivey, Kim Nelson, Adrian Gall, Paul Jepson, *Oregon State University*; Ron Eber, *Department of Land Conservation and Development*; Rex Sallabanks, *Idaho Department of Fish and Game*.

Federal Agencies

Chet Hadley, *Natural Resource Conservation Service*; Christopher Pearl, Elise Elliot-Smith, Jon Bart, Sue Haig, *U.S. Geological Service*; Barb Bresson-Kott, *U.S. Forest Service-Bureau of Land Management*; Dave Peter, Gene Yates, Jane Kertis, Jennifer Lippert, Joan Kittrell, Mark Gomez, Tim Bailey, *U.S. Forest Service*; Kat Beal, *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*; Jennifer Thompson, Mike Green, Sue Thomas, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office*; Verlyn Ebert, Dan Edwards, Chris McKay, Nell Fuller, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Assistance*.

Other Oregonians

And all Oregonians who provided comments on the materials and shared with us their vision, hopes and ideas for the future of conservation in Oregon.

Oregon Conservation Strategy was produced by:

ODFW Strategy Team

Gail McEwen; Martin Nugent; Holly Michael; Audrey Hatch; Peg Boulay; Matt Lawhead; Michelle Tate

ODFW Production

Wendy Foltz; Brad Wurfel



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