

# Arkansas

## *Ecological Services Field Office*

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### Photos (top to bottom)

*Endangered American bald eagle.*

*Endangered wood stork.*

*Successful bald eagle nests.*

*White River—an important aquatic resource.*

### Station Facts

- Established: 1997.
- FY 02 budget: \$1,264,000.
- Staff: 13.

### Station Goals

- Conserve, protect, and enhance Service trust resources such as migratory birds and endangered species, and their habitats.
- Restore degraded wetlands on privately owned lands.
- Investigate, prevent, and remediate effects of environmental pollution to maximize quality habitat for Service trust species.
- Implement recovery and Section 7 consultation activities for 30 federally listed endangered and threatened species in Arkansas.

### Services provided to

- Private citizens.
- Federal and state agencies.
- Local governments and community groups.
- Other Service divisions.

### Activity Highlights

- Annually reviews over 200 federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects for impacts on fish and wildlife.
- Annually conducts over 1000 formal and informal endangered species consultations.
- Assists other agencies in hazardous material spill contingency planning to minimize effects on fish and wildlife.

- Consults on Farm Bill and Swampbuster issues and reviews Wetland Reserve Program applications.
- Represents fish and wildlife interests in wetland issues, navigation, hydropower, gravel mining.
- Coordinates with other agencies on wetland restoration and endangered species recovery efforts.
- Works toward the conservation of caves and springs and the fish and wildlife they support through the Karst Resources Support Team.
- Works with all interests to manage the many uses of the White River: fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, navigation, agriculture, and hydropower.

### Questions and Answers

*What are the Service's goals in Arkansas?*

The Service seeks to conserve, protect, and enhance the Service's trust resources in Arkansas such as migratory birds, endangered species, and their habitats. The forested wetlands in the delta, particularly those along the White and Cache rivers, provide important habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl and other fish and wildlife resources.

At the same time, the Service acknowledges that there are other users of the natural resource base that have a claim to these resources such as navigation, agriculture, and hydropower. The Service seeks to understand the needs of these competing uses and to make recommendations that protect environmental resources while allowing for economic development. In addition, the Service works to protect habitat for endangered and threatened species that may be impacted by resource developments.

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The Service reviews and comments on over 200 Section 10/404 wetland permit applications per year. During these permit reviews, the Service seeks to make recommendations and modifications to projects that would first avoid, then minimize and rectify impacts, and finally compensate for wetland losses. The Service seeks to avoid loss of wetland habitat values and to restore previously degraded wetlands.

The Service works with the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission and other federal and state agencies to establish a series of wetland mitigation bank sites throughout Arkansas that can be used when there is a need to mitigate for wetland losses. Wetland mitigation banks contribute to the restoration of wetlands and increase wildlife that is dependant upon wetlands.

*What are the major contaminant issues in Arkansas?*

Contaminant issues in Arkansas include discharges of waste from large swine and chicken rearing facilities, discharges of raw sewage from municipal sewage treatment plants, runoff from agricultural lands that had been treated with persistent organochlorines, runoff from hazardous waste sites (superfund as well as many other industrial waste sites). These sources of contamination in many instances adversely affect National Wildlife Refuges and other Service trust responsibilities such as migratory birds and endangered species.

*How has the Service addressed threatened and endangered species issues in Arkansas?*

The Arkansas Field Office reviews approximately 1000 Federal actions per year under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Our goal is to protect the 30 endangered and threatened species present in Arkansas from further loss by reducing and removing threats to the species and to contribute to the species recovery.

Important threatened and endangered species in Arkansas include the Indiana bat, gray bat, Ozark big-eared bat, Ozark cavefish, and two cave crayfish which are dependent on the unique cave habitats in northern Arkansas. The Service is participating with other Federal and state agencies to investigate recent die-offs of bald eagles, a threatened species. Seven species of threatened and endangered freshwater mussels (Arkansas fatmucket, Ouachita rock pocketbook, pink mucket, speckled pocketbook, fat pocketbook, winged mapleleaf, and scaleshell) that are present in Arkansas' rivers are also a Service priority. Other endangered or threatened species that are present in the state are the leopard darter, pallid sturgeon, least tern, red-cockaded woodpecker, and American burying beetle, among others.

*What are the Service's accomplishments in assisting private landowners in managing habitat on their land?*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has made great strides in Arkansas. Through private lands initiatives (Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Arkansas Partners), significant gains have been made to restore and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife populations on private lands.

The Service and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) have a Cooperative Agreement to assist private landowners with habitat management. Over 48 Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects have been implemented by the AGFC, and over 6,307 acres of wetlands have been restored or enhanced throughout Arkansas.

The Service and the AGFC implemented two streambank stabilization projects in the Ouachita Mountains to correct abusive land use practices and restore stream bank integrity. Through August 2001, the Arkansas Partners Project, administered by Ducks Unlimited, Inc., covered 36 counties in the Mississippi River delta and the floodplains of the Ouachita and Red rivers. The Project has assisted 520 landowners in developing more than 105,303 acres of seasonal wetland

habitat, primarily on agricultural lands. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and its partners (Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service) have provided 2,077 water control structures for use in 1,064 wetland management units. More than 227,875 acres have been assessed for development as wintering and migration habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds.