

Management Plan

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Project
Rural Management Plan
Field Condition Sheet
2003

The Henry County Parks Department desires to make wildlife habitat improvements to a portion of their property. They want to improve the fishing in the pond and increase the wildlife diversity in anticipation of increasing nature hikes. Fishermen report catching many small bluegill, mostly in the 3-5 inch range.

The species to be managed include:

- largemouth bass/bluegill
- wood duck
- great-horned owl
- brown thrasher
- hairy woodpecker

The parks department desires to see more native waterfowl using the pond, especially the colorful wood duck. Park staff plan to schedule both evening and day time nature walks. Owls are always a favorite during evening walks. The brown thrasher is a colorful and noisy songbird which catches attention during day hikes.

The area to be managed lies inside the blue line. Assume the tennis court area is a flat, mown lawn. Keep expenses \$10,000 or less.

*** Notes from the critique ***

Critique by chair: Dean Zimmerman and Brian Miller. Rod Williams also evaluated the management plans.

General instructions for writing a wildlife management plan

Evaluate the area for the animals that you are managing. The whole site must be evaluated, not just what you can see from standing in one place. Make sure you get around and look at the entire area to see what is there.

Look at the score sheet. A lot of you are not doing everything it says in the manual that are covered on the written recommendations. The score sheet lists 5 major categories that you must discuss in your plan. The categories, and the possible points for each, are:

1. List species to be managed (5 points) If your plan is going to make any sense, you need to let the reader know what species you are managing for.
2. List the management objectives for the property for each species (5 points)
3. Plan development – Be sure to assess the habitat. Look at what is there and what is missing. Talk about the good features that were there that need to be kept and the essential habitat elements that are missing. (5 points) Then recommend wildlife management practices that will correct the deficient habitat components. (5 points).

4. Plan implementation (10 points) For each species, list the management practices you will apply and explain where and how they will be implemented. (5 points) Explain the expected effects these practices will have on the habitat. (5 points)
5. Evaluations – how are you going to assess the impact your management practices have had? (10 points)
6. Neatness and overall quality (10 points)

Specific features we were looking for

The species – bass and blue gill, conditions they were catching 3-5 “bluegill (no big ones, no bass). Question: What does that mean? Answer: We need to add bass and to remove some blue gill, or remove all the fish and start fresh. You might shock the pond or use a seine to see what fish are there before deciding what to do.

Wood ducks – need to get rid of some of the domestic birds, put up bird boxes, plant cattails or shrubby species (so branches overhang the water) and to provide insects around the shoreline - around the pond to provide brood habitat

Thrasher – Question: what does it need? Answer: Stage 4 – shrubby areas, (like cardinals, catbirds), plant berry-bearing shrubs - dogwoods, cranberries, nesting sites, etc.

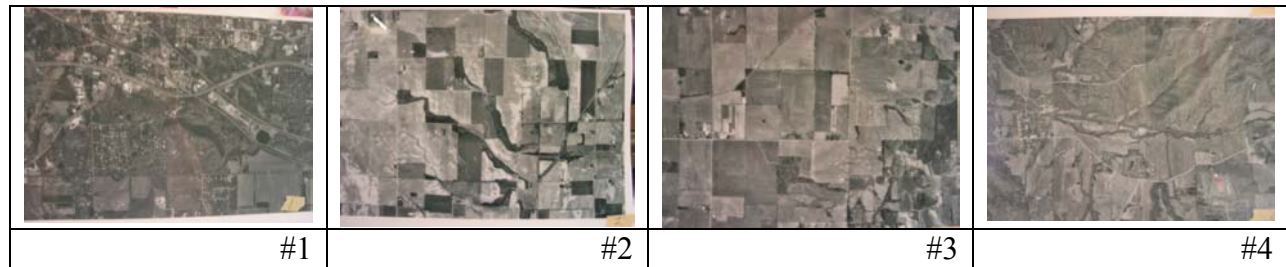
Owls – this property was really quite good – a lot of nesting cavities, & fairly open, what they needed the most was grassy areas – tall bluegrass

Woodpecker – pretty good as it is – manual mentions logs, they like to ... maybe some thorny piles.

Note: This site had a high number of snags and cavities. Think about what an area has and what is needed. It is a good idea to note this in your plan and explain the benefits to wildlife.

Do not forget to check out pp 131 through 139 of your manual.

Aerial Photos



(see larger print of photos, enclosed)

*** Notes from the critique ***

Critique by Chair: Dave Osborne and Brian MacGowan. Other judges that listened to aerial photos reasons – Warren Gartner and Jonathan Ferris

Note: these were difficult photos to judge.

White-tail deer, 4-3-2-1, splits 5 -1-1-1 (Brian MacGowan)

- looking at interspersal 4-5-6, is an edge species – like a different succession stages, looking at #4 – you do have a big chunk of forested habitat, but notice a lot of little draws, a lot of forest/shrub and agricultural areas mixed in. #3 was next primarily due to the forested part – in #3 the field sizes were much smaller than in #2. IT really depends on what part of the state you are from – depending on what you look at as quality deer habitat - these little small patches of woods can hold a lot of deer in #3. People in the SE would look at #4 as quality deer habitat
- #2 had large field sizes, a large area with no cover
- #1 was pretty good, from the standpoint of had a lot of succession stages 4, 5, 6, and area that was urban, and a large area that we felt was probably a cemetery, with a highway, urban area, some people might argue that this would be the second place and it could be argued but the judges felt that the development moved it to the bottom. The last 3 were only 1 apart because they could be argued.

(Dave Osborne)

- One of the things that I always try to pick up on is sets of reasons. So many participants try to spend all their time trying to remember what numbers they chose and very little on why.
- Its not about remembering 3-2-4-1 or 1-3...oh, man I messed up...You get yourself bogged down on that.
- You should talk about reasons in pairs of top & bottom. If you want to look at some sample reasons look at the livestock reasons.

Example reasons:

I am going to give you as set of reasons on Northern Bobwhite. I placed Northern Bobwhite 3-2-4-1. I felt that these 4 photos for Northern Bobwhite quail that we had an easy bottom that was #1.

#1 fell to the bottom for several reasons. First, it was very urbanized. There were not a lot of ag fields or areas in there that I felt were conducive for nesting cover or survivability of chicks. One of the possible reasons that I mention survivability would be many homes with cats, predators that would hamper reproductivity of Bobwhite quail.

I had a pair at the top, #3 & #2 that were very close. There were not a lot of differences in the amount of habitat or the amount of proper types of habitat in successional stages 2, 3, & 4. So I felt it was close at the top but I put #3 over 2 because the field sizes were smaller which would give a little more edge effect and a little bit more on the amount of habitat for bobwhite quail.

#4 ended up being my third place. 4 had the best overall cover as far as woods and edge but I felt the large block of forest in this photo hampered it for Bobwhite quail in that area. Therefore, those are the reasons that I placed this class 3-2-4-1.

Thank you very much, do you have any questions.

Comments:

- That would be how I would give reasons.
- Some of you decided to wear hats or glasses. Judges need to see your eyes. Hats and sunglasses should be left with your notes.
- Work on your reasons. Some of you might have livestock reasons tapes you could watch.
- Think about structure. In addition, do not fret on the exact numbers. A lot of you get the numbers out and then stopped.
- Cuts for Northern Bobwhite were 1-1-1-5. We thought you should definitely put #1 at the bottom. We felt that the top 3 could be argued any way you want to. In SE Indiana, I caught more quail 4 than I would on 3 or 2. That is because in that part of the country all the little edge fields and all those valleys are where the quail live. Someone from northern IN you are going to pick 3 & 2 over 4 because that is what you are used to.

Notes for the other species: (Dave Osborne)

Great Horned Owl – 4-1-3-2: larger size of trees, larger avail of cavities. Do very well in urban settings. (cuts 1-4-1) – should have definitely had a top and bottom pair.

Eastern gray squirrel – 4-1-3-2, best natural habitat in 4, but sometimes in urban areas populations can be very high so 1 is close. (cuts 1-5-1)

Eastern Bluebird – 1-4-2-3 (cuts 1-4-2) – needs cavities, many edges, will probably find a lot of supplemental housing in urban areas, because that is where bluebird houses sell.

Eastern Cottontail 4-1-2-3 (cuts 3-3-2)

Coyote 4-1-2-3 (cuts 2-2-2)

Do well anywhere, looked at available of other species, did not cut the class very hard. We felt you could make a good argument for any. Basically, coyotes need a trashcan and a bush and can survive in urban areas on rodents, cats, & small dogs.

Large mouth bass 1-4-3-2 simply on the amount of surface area of waters, ponds, lakes, & rivers (cuts 5-3-2). #1 had a large lake in the middle.

Look at the photos as a whole, look for those habitat types, remember anywhere you have an edge you will have more successional stages. The more edge that you see, the more of all those earlier successional stages you will have.

Q about photo #4 – the upper part is probably fairly young. We do not have a lot of mature, old growth forest in IN) What you are looking for is larger trees, more like cauliflower, that will have cavities. Smoother texture is younger, bumpier, more like cauliflower tends to be larger trees and here the climax species is? Beech- Maple

Foods

(Chair: Mark Pochon)

*** Notes from the critique ***

- There were 102 right answers.
- We are considering giving points for the identification of the food group (what you write in at the top of the score sheet) for next year. This way you would get credit for the identification – even if you do not know what eats it!
- A couple of the foods only had one right answer (nectar from flowers & scorpions).
- See pages 115 to 117 in the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program National Handbook (2001) for the right answers.



Notes about foods in this CDE:

scorpions – rare in IN, mostly just found in the very southern part, there is one species of scorpions and it is much smaller than the one we had in the contest.

fish – this is a very generalized category

insects — one of the most common food sources, there were 27 right answers

nectar – this was shown as a flower without leaves or roots (as specified on page 117 of the national WHEP manual. If the leaves and roots are on it is to be considered a forb in this CDE), for this contest (see book) - only butterfly

centipedes/millipedes – only lizards are listed as eating centipedes and millipedes

snails – note that these are eaten by fish, ducks, frogs, lizards, moles, salamanders, shrews, and turkeys. It is generally easier to note what type of animals eat a particular item, than to purely memorize each answer.

fruits & berries – this category can include soft, fleshy, pulp-covered seed.

seeds – Note that the term grain is reserved for commercial crops (corn, wheat, barley, and oats)

forbs — greens, the book is very vague, any non woody, not grass; anything that is green but not a shrub or tree or grass is a forb. The note on page 117 of the national WHEP manual states “can be shown with a flower part as part of the plant”).

small mammals – The national WHEP manuals states “Mammals - any mammal, regardless of size, fits into this category.”).