

# ANIMALS

## Habitat Degradation

Soil

Water

Air

Plants

**Animals**

Inadequate Habitat  
for Fish and Wildlife

Habitat  
Degradation

Livestock Production  
Limitation

Energy

### Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife - Habitat Degradation

Quantity, quality or connectivity of food, cover, space, shelter and/or water is inadequate to meet requirements of identified fish, wildlife or invertebrate species.

#### What is it?

Because of deficient habitat, upland, wetland and/or aquatic organisms may lack: adequate food and proper nutrition to grow, maintain health, and reproduce; shelter from adverse environmental conditions; protection from predators; environmental features necessary for a particular life need; space to locate a mate, obtain sufficient food and water, and rest; and quality or quantity of water sufficient to support proper metabolism and maintain health.

#### Why is it important?

Perhaps the greatest threat to fish, wildlife, and invertebrate species is the destruction of their habitat. The availability and arrangement of food, cover, shelter, water, and space determine the number of organisms that a region can support, which is also known as carrying capacity. Increasing carrying capacity is critical to attaining long-term population stability. Conserving existing habitat and restoring habitat shortcomings improves the odds that fish and wildlife communities will thrive. When landowners keep wildlife communities intact, less regulatory intervention is required to ensure the survival of individual species.

#### What can be done about it?

Landowners can address some habitat shortcomings on their property by providing food plots, nest boxes, brush piles, watering facilities, etc. However, maintaining a sustainable population often requires cooperation of multiple landowners. Simply having considerable amounts of food, cover, or water does not ensure a sustainable wildlife population. Within any area, large quantities of potential food, water, or cover may go unused because they are too far apart in relation to the customary travels of the animals in an area. An animal could travel a long distance to find water if necessary, but it would do little good if the animal was preyed upon along the way. Properly arranging the habitat components across a landscape is important to ensure that each component benefits the species of concern. Accomplishing this goal requires an understanding of the specific habitat needs of the managed species.

### Habitat Degradation at a Glance

Problems / Indicators - Loss of habitat to support desired wildlife species	
Causes	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient shelter/cover</li> <li>• Insufficient food</li> <li>• Insufficient water quantity or quality</li> <li>• Fragmented habitat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nest boxes or platforms, brush piles, rock piles, root wads</li> <li>• Food plots and/or leave portions of crop fields unharvested</li> <li>• Watering facilities,</li> <li>• Buffers, hedgerows, windbreaks, and similar plant structures</li> </ul>