

## **WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT** (1988, R2000, R2001, R2007, R2021)



### **Policy Statement**

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes wildlife and wildlife habitat are essential to all life and that human knowledge, resilience, adaptability, and leadership are critical to develop new ideas, opportunities, and solutions to support wildlife habitat.

Furthermore, ASLA also believes:

- Wildlife, wildlife habitat, and related ecosystems need to be understood on a local, regional, and global scale to assure balance, biodiversity, and ecological function.
- Wildlife and wildlife habitat contribute to both the spiritual and economic well-being of society.
- Human activity is a major factor in the destruction of and disruption to wildlife and the fracturing of wildlife habitat.
- Maintaining and enhancing connectivity of habitat to assure forage and migration patterns can help mitigate the impacts of climate change on wildlife.

ASLA Supports:

- Identification and application of planning and design principles that promote the enhancement, protection, interconnection, and management of landscapes to support wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Local, State, and Federal efforts that preserve, protect, connect, and expand public lands for sustainable wildlife habitat to reverse and mitigate wildlife population decline.
- Organizations and activities that enhance sustainable practices on private lands, including acquisition and conservation easements to protect wildlife.

### **Justification**

Landscape architects have a unique understanding of the complexity of ecosystems and the relationships between humans and nature. Landscape architects are trained to design solutions that meet individual and community needs and desires while preserving, maintaining, and increasing ecosystem biodiversity to ensure the survival and well-being of all life.

Landscape architects work in a range of landscape types from pristine to developed. Whether landscapes are damaged, untouched, or remediated, landscape architects develop solutions that balance the needs of humans with the needs of wildlife and their ecosystems.

Through advocacy, project work, and public involvement, landscape architects increase public awareness of wildlife, wildlife habitats, and their contributions to human welfare. Landscape architects promote access to wildlife habitat focusing on equitable distribution of parks and open spaces that support wildlife.

Landscape architects lead or are an integral part of interdisciplinary teams that determine the location of transportation corridors, develop urban growth boundaries, master-plan national, state, and local parks and open spaces, and develop sustainable practices to allow safe and economic resource extraction and management of agricultural lands.



Landscape architects facilitate the integration of habitat protection and enhancement into all project types.

## Issue

Wildlife refers to all life from mammals to microbes too small to see. People depend on wildlife for food, medicine, pollination of plants, pest control, genetic resources and defining cultural values. Science has shown that humans have a basic biophilic need for and connection to nature.

Many cultures have demonstrated successful interaction with the environment, surviving and thriving for thousands of years in a balanced state, providing valuable lessons for today's society. For example, the Mayan civilization was an agrarian-based society that coexisted / survived for over 3,000 years. Research is ongoing into how past civilizations developed solutions to mitigate their impacts on the environment including deforestation, water scarcity, pollution, and climate change.

Human activities have dramatically altered the environment, reducing species diversity and causing mass extinction of birds, mammals, insects, and aquatic wildlife. This activity has caused damage to the environment through habitat degradation and loss, and overwhelming economic loss to societies throughout the globe. Humans have responded by developing and implementing science-based knowledge and practices that restore and expand habitat. For example, nearly extinct populations (e.g. bald eagles, bison, whales) have been regenerated by knowledge, understanding, and human action.

Due to changes in the environment, whether human-caused or natural, species that once played a fundamental role in an ecosystem have adapted, with some becoming invasive. The bark beetles of the Rocky Mountain region (Hodgson 2020) are observed to have "killed 21% of Colorado's forests since 1996" (Romeo 2019) due to changes in the surrounding ecosystem. In addition, wildlife populations can serve as vectors for transmission of diseases to humans such as Lyme disease, malaria, and rabies. Encroaching on wildlife and natural habitats has made humans vulnerable to pandemics such as COVID-19, which has resulted in the loss of human life and damage to the world economy. Plans to protect wildlife are, in essence, plans to protect humans.

The wildland urban interface (WUI) is now considered the fastest-growing land use type in the United States (Radeloff, et al. <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/13/3314>), resulting in increased conflicts between humans and wildlife. New housing developments directly displace habitat and increase impervious surfaces, leading to flooding and threats of wildfire. These and other indirect impacts of development cause additional loss and fragmentation of habitat. The loss is further exacerbated by climate change, which modifies the environment and associated wildlife habitat. Wildlife species will have to adapt to new environmental conditions or move to find suitable habitat. Species unable to adapt or move may face extinction, adding to the ongoing loss of biodiversity and associated reduction of ecosystem services.

## Resources

ASLA Climate Advocacy  
<https://www.asla.org/climateadvocacy.aspx>

[Endangered Species Act of 1973 — US Fish and Wildlife Service](#) is a conservation law that has effectively protected endangered species for over 40 years. Since its

implementation, 99 percent of listed species including the bald eagle and the gray wolf have been spared from extinction.

[Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#) is an international agreement for the protection of migratory birds. Originally enacted in 1918 the Act has evolved to include nations worldwide.

[http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/EnvironmentandDev.ashx\\_.pdf](http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/EnvironmentandDev.ashx_.pdf)

<https://developingresilience.uli.org/case/austins-wildland-urban-interface-code/>

### **Interrelated Policies**

- Agriculture
- Climate Change and Resilience
- Coastal Zones
- Environmental Sustainability
- Invasive Species
- National Parks
- Outdoor Lighting
- Public Lands
- Rural Landscapes
- State, Regional and Local Parks and Trails
- Transgenic Plants and the Environment
- Urban Growth and Development
- Vegetation and the Built Environment
- Water Quality and Conservation
- Waterways
- Wetlands

