

wildlife habitat

A habitat is a place where an animal (or plant) lives and finds water, food, shelter and room to grow and reproduce. A habitat can be a wetland, an alfalfa field or even a park (Urban Wildlife Habitat). As the population of Utah grows, so does the demand for houses, schools, stores, and roads. This growth puts pressure on critical habitat and increases the chances for conflict with wildlife. The amount of wildlife habitat statewide has been in decline in recent years. Some of the most significant reasons for this decline is the loss of open space to urbanization, agricultural conversion, draining of wetlands and other development patterns which often fragment habitat (Wilmer 2000).

The protection of habitat is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the preservation of habitat is important for ecological diversity and ecosystem health. It is also important to recreation and tourism opportunities such as hunting, bird watching, and hiking. These activities often translate into expenditures for food and lodging, increasing income in many communities. Perhaps the biggest incentive for the protection of wildlife habitat is the threat of federal control. If a species becomes listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, the result is federal jurisdiction of that species' habitat or federal regulation of local planning and development (Wilmer 2000).

Communities can reduce the chance of federal intervention through careful planning. Including wildlife habitat in planning and zoning maps is the first step to the successful protection of habitat. From there, a conservation plan which can cover multiple species and habitats and can facilitate habitat protection or restoration is useful. Perhaps one of the most important parts of habitat protection is cooperation with private landowners. Making sure landowners are educated about the potential economic and quality of life values associated with wildlife and are willing to do their part to protect wildlife habitat is an essential step to avoiding federal intervention.



Wildlife habitat is important not only for ecosystem health, but for recreation and tourism as well.

references and further reading:

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