

**Appendix 3**

**Native Habitats of the Central Hardwoods BCR**

**Current Status and Conservation Needs**

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**Habitat Type**

**Current Status**

**Conservation Needs**

**Upland Forest and Woodlands**

Although oak-hickory and pine-oak forests and woodlands were once prevalent in various areas within the Central Hardwoods BCR, little of the native pine woodlands or pine-dominated forests exist today.

Restoration of large expanses of native short-leaf pine dominated woodlands is needed to support populations of the now rare Bachman’s Sparrow and possible re-introductions of Brown-headed Nuthatch and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Oak woodlands also should be restored on appropriate land types. A variety of forest management and harvest techniques are needed to provide the range of conditions needed by the entire suite of priority bird species.

## **Shrublands**

Native grass-shrubland habitats are provided by barrens, glades, savannas, and shrub-prairies, and forest regeneration cuts. Most of these habitat types have been converted to other land uses or have been degraded by decades of fire suppression.

Restoration of these habitat types are needed not only to enhance habitat for shrubland-associated birds, but also to secure populations of other rare, threatened and endangered species associated with those systems. However, maintaining a shrub component at some stage in the life-cycle of these ecosystems will be important if birds are to benefit.

## **Grasslands**

Native grasslands historically were represented by prairies and shrub-prairies. These habitats were most extensive in the western part of the Ozarks and in the large barrens of the Interior Low Plateaus, although small prairie intrusions were scattered among many woodland landtype associations across the BCR. Only small remnants of those habitat types exist today.

Restoration of native prairies should be attempted wherever possible, especially where the restorations can be embedded within landscapes with containing relatively large amounts of other grassland types. Conversion of fescue to native warm-season grass and forb mixes can also help to provide habitat for the grassland bird species suite, but linear strips of woody vegetation that fragment grassland landscapes should be removed to reduce predation and parasitism rates.

## **Wetlands**

Most of the wetland habitats in the BCR are and were associated with the region's larger river systems. Many of those habitats have been drained and converted to other land uses. However, many restoration projects have been undertaken in the BCR, though they are scattered and fairly isolated at this point. Wet meadows are another potentially important wetland habitat type that are associated with hydric soils in prairie ecosystems.

Wetland restoration projects and the protection of existing wetlands of various kinds continue to be needed in the Central Hardwoods. Locations of wet meadows need to be mapped and the kinds of priority birds they support throughout the year should be assessed.

**Bottomland hardwood forest and associated cane thickets**

Bottomland forests in the BCR were associated with the floodplains of both rivers and larger creeks across the BCR. Much of the forest acreage has been converted to crop or pasture land. Cane thickets (*Arundinaria gigantea*) once formed extensive corridors along many of the BCR's riparian areas and were an important component of the breeding habitat of the high-priority Swainson's Warbler, but now exist in relatively small and isolated patches.

Extensive tracts of extant bottomland forest need to be identified and secured through acquisition, easements, or voluntary incentive programs. Restoration of bottomland forests should be targeted in areas where existing fragments could be consolidated into large tracts. Restoration of cane thickets should be targeted in areas where existing fragments could be consolidated and restoration efforts would provide thickets along relatively long stretches of river adjacent to large tracts of high quality forest.