



# Ozark Plateau Ecosystem



## USFWS Field Stations

The Ecosystem Team includes 5 National Fish Hatcheries, 3 Ecological Services Field Offices, 2 National Wildlife Refuges, 2 Law Enforcement Offices. This ecosystem crosses the Service's Regional Boundaries encompassing portions of Regions 3, 4, and 2.

## Partners

State agencies, including the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Arkansas State Parks, Illinois Natural History Survey, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Federal partners including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division, and Department of Agriculture; Non-governmental conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Oklahoma Wildlife Federation, the Trust for Public Land, and Bat Conservation International; Local Governments, Caving Clubs and Spelunkers; Universities in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Oklahoma; and local landowners throughout the Ozark Plateau.

## Ecosystem Description

The Ozark Plateau is a dome shaped uplift of approximately 50,000 square miles in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. It is characterized by horizontal bedrock, caves, sink holes, and natural springs. The rivers and streams in this area flow in all directions. Losing streams recharge groundwater. The ecosystem is rich in biological diversity and includes species that are found only in the Ozark Plateau. The main vegetation is upland oak-hickory forest and bottomland hardwood forest in the floodplains of large rivers.

## Landscape Priorities

### ■ *Conserve Karst System*

Conservation of the karst system of the Ozarks includes work to improve and protect water quality, educate the public on the effects of human activity on karst, and protection of the unique underground species that live in karst habitat. It also involves developing partnerships

with private landowners, caving clubs, conservation organizations, local governments, and others to further the protection efforts for this unique resource.

### ■ *Conserve Unique and Rare Species*

The Ozark Plateau is home to numerous rare and declining species, unique endemics, neotropical migrant birds, and other species that are of concern to the Service. In addition to conservation and protection of these species and their habitats, the Ozarks is faced with the management challenges of addressing invasive species issues.

### ■ *Improve Recreational Fisheries and Mitigation Hatcheries*

The Service will continue to address the fisheries needs of altered environments as a result of the construction of federal dams. The goal is to ensure a healthy aquatic ecosystem and an adequate sustainable recreational fisheries. National Fish Hatcheries, in partnership with state natural resource agencies, will stock fish species (both native and non-native) ideally suited for these altered environments in Northern Arkansas and Southwestern Missouri.

## Contacts

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## Web Address

*Ozark Plateau ecosystem:*  
<http://midwest.fws.gov/ecosys/ozark.htm>