



Big Rivers

Quick Facts:

- The Upper Mississippi River provides habitat for more than 300 species of birds, 134 species of fish, 37 mussel species, 45 amphibians and 57 mammals.
- The Lower Missouri River provides habitat for four federally listed species, two candidates for federal listing and eight species of special concern.

Management Needs:

- Status and trend of fish, wildlife and habitat resources
- Best practices for reconnecting floodplain habitat to the river
- Effective control of exotic and invasive species (e.g., carp)
- Mussel habitat creation and management techniques

Current Status

The Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois and Minnesota rivers provide immense conservation value to fish and wildlife resources. The Mississippi serves as a continental migration corridor for waterfowl and other migratory birds, while the Missouri provides habitat for several federally listed species. The Illinois River provides migration habitat for millions of ducks and geese making their way to and from their breeding grounds. The Minnesota River and its associated pothole wetlands provide breeding habitat for waterfowl and assorted other wetland wildlife.

River habitats have changed drastically over the past century. Wetlands and bottomland forests have been converted to row crop agriculture. Locks and dams have been constructed, and riverbeds channelized to accommodate navigation and flood control. Levees, ditches and field tiles have been added to their watersheds to control water.

Conserving the fish, wildlife and habitat of large rivers is a uniquely challenging goal for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We approach the challenge in a variety of ways, with more than 20 field stations devoted to an array of issues: restoring natural



Hot Topics:

Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge - Comprehensive Conservation Plan being developed

Control Invasive Species - Asian carp barrier being studied

Endangered Species Issues - Higgins' eye pearl mussel restoration

Environmental Management Program

"Illinois River 2020"

river function, recovering endangered species such as freshwater mussels and studying large-river fisheries. The threat of invasive species adds to the challenge, as does the use of large-river systems for navigation, water supply, power and recreation.

Fifteen national wildlife refuges have been established in large river basins in the Midwest to optimize habitats needed to sustain plant and animal communities. At Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Missouri, natural river function is being restored in some refuge units, with spectacular results. Mark Twain, Upper Mississippi and Illinois River refuges provide some of the best habitat in the Midwest for migratory birds.



- National Wildlife Refuge
- ⊕ Ecological Services
- Fisheries Resource Office
- National Fish Hatchery
- | Sea Lamprey Control
- ★ Law Enforcement
- ▲ Private Land Office
- ⊕ Wetland Management District HQ