

FOREST HABITAT NARRATIVE

Habitat description

A plant community extending over a large area and dominated by trees, the crowns of which form an unbroken covering layer or canopy.

Problems affecting species and habitats

Species threats

Respondents ranked the following threats to wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Threats to wildlife in forest habitats
1 (tie)	Habitat loss (breeding range)
1 (tie)	Habitat loss (feeding/foraging areas)
2	Unintentional take/ direct mortality (e.g., vehicle collisions, power line collisions, by-catch, harvesting equipment, land preparation machinery)
3	Diseases/parasites (of the species itself)
4	Degradation of movement/migration routes (overwintering habitats, nesting and staging sites)
5 (tie)	Invasive/non-native species
5 (tie)	Species overpopulation
6	Bioaccumulation of contaminants
7	High sensitivity to pollution
8 (tie)	Predators (native or domesticated)
8 (tie)	Genetic pollution (hybridization)
8 (tie)	Specialized reproductive behavior or low reproductive rates
9 (tie)	Viable reproductive population size or availability
9 (tie)	Large home range requirements
10 (tie)	Regulated hunting/fishing pressure (too much)
10 (tie)	Unregulated collection pressure
11	Dependence on irregular resources (cyclical annual variations) (e.g., food, water, habitat limited due to annual variations in availability)

Respondents offered additional threats to wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Captive cervids/genetic contamination from farmed white-tails
- Fragmentation of forest habitat and loss of farmland habitat to housing/construction
- The spread of bush honeysuckles

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- Tree diseases
- Tree insects
- Removal of fence rows
- It might be possible to overharvest fox squirrels in small forest fragments in the northern part of the state but I believe that this too is unlikely

Respondents listed top threats to wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Deer: Diseases/genetic integrity
 - Captive cervids contaminate genetic integrity and increase chance of infection for wild deer
 - CWD, EHD and tuberculosis would be devastating to a deer herd of our density
- Overpopulation will lead to an unmanageable resource and severe habitat degradation
- Habitat fragmentation and destruction
- Invasive species and its relation to habitat loss
- Loss of migration habitat: The large-scale mortality reported about wind turbines and other sources is the most threatening issue for avian wildlife. We also need information about how this species migrates to begin thinking about where not to place such structures. Loss of winter range is a slight concern since we don't know where they are going
- Fox squirrels: The two greatest threats to fox squirrels are overall loss of habitat and fragmentation of remaining forest tracts
- Bobcat: Threats to bobcat populations are human related factors such as direct mortality (incidental take, road kills and persecution) and habitat loss. Conversion of native communities and habitats for human use cause direct loss of habitats for bobcats and prey
- Box turtles: Top threats to Eastern box turtle are habitat loss, road mortality and human collection

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the threats to wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- I would say so. I don't know about fox squirrels, it seems like they like fragmented parcels.

Habitat threats

Respondents ranked threats to forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Threats to forest habitats
1	Commercial or residential development (sprawl)
2	Habitat fragmentation
3	Habitat degradation
4	Invasive/non-native species
5	Agricultural/forestry practices
6 (tie)	Diseases (of plants that create habitat)
6 (tie)	Counterproductive financial incentives or

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- regulations
- 7 Nonpoint source pollution (sedimentation and nutrients)
- 8 Successional change
- 9 (tie) Residual contamination (persistent toxins)
- 9 (tie) Point source pollution (continuing)
- 10 (tie) Mining/acidification
- 10 (tie) Drainage practices (stormwater runoff)

Respondents noted additional threats to forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Modern farm practices: the creation of large open, clean farm fields leaves no habitat for deer or many other mammals, clearing for crops, fence row removal
- Urban spread
- Construction

Respondents listed top threats to forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Loss of habitat/habitat degradation/habitat fragmentation (urban sprawl, development, farming practices)
 - Interrupts movements from summer to winter ranges
 - Forces unnatural movement
 - Increases accidental mortality
 - Creates opportunity to spread disease
 - Loss of foraging ability

Respondents noted that biggest threats to bobcats, box turtles and fox squirrels are habitat loss and fragmentation due to commercial development and agricultural practices.

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the threats to forest habitats. Their responses included:

- Good. I wonder if successional changes will be a bigger player as we see our forest lands changing in species composition. I.E. the loss of Oak/Hickory in the Hoosier National Forest.

Additional research and survey efforts

Current body of research

Species research

Fifty-one percent of respondents stated that the current body of science for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana is adequate, complete, up-to-date and extensive. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said that it is inadequate.

Respondents identified the following citations (title, author, date, publisher) that would give the best overview of wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana.

Title = Mammals of Indiana;

Author = John Whitaker;

Date = IN Press;

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Publisher = IU Press

Title = Nocturnal Behavior of Eastern Red Bats;

Author = Brianne Everson;

Date = 2005?;

Publisher = MS Thesis, Indiana State University (not yet complete)

Title = The bobcat in Illinois;

Author = Alan Woolf and Clayton Nielsen;

Date = 2002;

Publisher = Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Title = Status and management of bobcat in the United States over three decades;

Author = Woolf, A. and G.F. Hubert, Jr.;

Date = 1998;

Publisher = Wildlife Society Bulletin 26:287-293.

Title = White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management;

Author = Halls, L. K. (editor);

Date = 1984;

Publisher = Stackpole Books

Title = IN Mammals;

Author = Whittaker

Title = White-tailed Deer Ecology & Management;

Author = Wildlife Management Institute Book;

Date = 1984;

Publisher = Stackpole Books

Title = White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management;

Author = Lowell K. Halls;

Date = 1984;

Publisher = Stackpole Books

Title = Mammals of Indiana;

Author = Russell E. Mumford and John O. Whitaker, Jr.;

Date = 1982;

Publisher = Indiana University Press

Title = Gray and Fox Squirrel Management in Indiana;

Author = John M. Allen;

Date = 1964;

Publisher = Indiana Department of Conservation

Title = A long term study of a box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) population at Allee Memorial Woods, Indiana, with emphasis on survivorship;

Author = Williams and Parker;

Date = 1987;

Publisher = Herpetologica

Title = North American Box Turtles;

Author = Dodd;

Date = 2001;

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Publisher = University of Oklahoma Press

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the current body of science for wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- Yes but I think there is some information out there on the Wild Turkey that could be included.

Habitat research

Over ten percent of respondents stated that the current body of science for forest habitats in Indiana is Complete, up to date and extensive, a third indicated that it was Adequate, over twenty percent responded that it was inadequate, and twenty percent responded other including "Unknown" and "I am not sure on the habitat's body of science... I would assume complete and up to date".

Respondents identified the following citations (title, author, date, publisher) that would give the best overview of forest habitats in Indiana.

Title = Natural Heritage of Indiana;
Author = Marion Jackson;
Date = 1999;
Publisher = IU Press

Title = Nocturnal Behavior of Eastern Red Bats;
Author = Brianne Everson;
Date = 2005?;
Publisher = Unpublished MS Thesis (should be complete by May 2005)

Title = The bobcat in Illinois;
Author = Alan Woolf and Clayton Nielsen;
Date = 2002;
Publisher = Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Title = White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management;
Author = Halls, L. K. (editor);
Date = 1984;
Publisher = Stackpole Books

Title = White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management;
Author = Lowell K. Halls;
Date = 1984;
Publisher = Stackpole Books

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the current body of science for forest habitats. Their responses included:

- More needs to be done.

Research needs

Species research

Respondents ranked research needs for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Research needs for wildlife in forest habitats
1	Population health (genetic and physical)
2	Threats (predators/competition, contamination)
3	Life cycle
4	Relationship/dependence on specific habitats
5	Distribution and abundance
6	Limiting factors (food, shelter, water, breeding sites)

Respondents noted additional research needs for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- White-tailed deer:
 - A deer harvest analysis and modeling program/baseline life history data
 - CWD (all aspects)
 - The aging techniques (tooth wear) biologists use were developed in New York and may not be accurate for deer of the Midwest. My personal experience with deer of known ages indicates that wear is less than the aging charts we currently use. Additional local research needs to be done if we are interested in accurately aging deer over 2 1/2 years of age
 - Research needs explore the role of age and social structure in deer herd health
- Bats: We desperately need to know how bats interact with each other in terms of competition
- Fox squirrels: Due to high fragmentation of forest tracts in Indiana (especially northern Indiana) I believe that dispersal distance is a critical area of research. I also would like to see a research project that evaluates the amount of harvest pressure can be sustained by isolated metapopulations of squirrels

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the research needs for wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- This looks like a very small scope of critters. We need to be more broad.

Habitat research

Respondents ranked research needs for forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Research needs for forest habitats
1	Distribution and abundance (fragmentation)

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- 2 Threats (land use change/competition, contamination/global warming)
- 3 Successional changes
- 4 Relationship/dependence on specific site conditions
- 5 Growth and development of individual components of the habitat

A respondent noted additional research need for forest habitats in Indiana:

- Research needs explore the effects of land development

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the research needs for forest habitats. Their responses included:

- Yes-this is important. Our forest lands are just as important as wetlands. We just do not seem to sell that value the same.

Conservation actions necessary

Species actions

Respondents ranked conservation efforts by how well they address threats to wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Conservation efforts for wildlife in forest habitats
1	Protection of migration routes
2 (tie)	Population management (hunting, trapping)
2 (tie)	Food plots
2 (tie)	Regulation of collecting
3	Habitat protection (use below for details)
4 (tie)	Disease/parasite management
4 (tie)	Public education to reduce human disturbance
4 (tie)	Exotic/invasive species control
4 (tie)	Threats reduction
4 (tie)	Limiting contact with pollutants/contaminants
4 (tie)	Culling/selective removal

Respondents noted other current conservation practices for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

- Deer contraceptives: Currently not used due to efficacy and economical reasons

Respondents recommended these practices for more effective conservation for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

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- Woodland habitat protection/control forest habitat fragmentation
- Study migration routes to protect habitats
- Protect corridors between fragments
- Population management via hunting
- Ban cervid farming and canned hunting
- Invasive species control
- Preserve large continuous blocks of forest habitat and prohibit collection of box turtles
- Attempt to lower meso predator numbers and protect nest cavities

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Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the practices for more effective conservation for wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- yes

Habitat actions

Respondents ranked conservation efforts by how well they address threats to forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Conservation efforts for forest habitats
1	Habitat protection incentives (financial)
2 (tie)	Habitat protection through regulation
2 (tie)	Habitat restoration on public lands
2 (tie)	Corridor development/protection
3	Land use planning
4	Habitat restoration incentives (financial)
5	Habitat protection on public lands
6 (tie)	Habitat restoration through regulation
6 (tie)	Technical assistance
6 (tie)	Cooperative land management agreements (conservation easements)
6 (tie)	Succession control (fire, mowing)
6 (tie)	Protection of adjacent buffer zone
6 (tie)	Pollution reduction
6 (tie)	Restrict public access and disturbance
6 (tie)	Managing water regimes

Respondents listed other current conservation practices for forest habitats in Indiana:

- Restriction of motorized access into habitat

Respondents recommended the following conservation practices for forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Habitat protection and management
 - Preservation of forest and agricultural landscapes
 - Protect large blocks of natural communities and habitats
 - Manage forests to provide early/mid successional stage habitats
- Habitat restoration
- Legislation to protect habitat
- Create corridors between forest tracts
- Provide financial incentives to protect or create forest habitat

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Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the conservation practices in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- We need to educate the publics on the importance of their forest resources. They need to be managed not protected.

Proposed plans for monitoring

Current monitoring

Species monitoring

Respondents were aware of the following monitoring efforts by state agencies for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Statewide year-round monitoring
- Statewide once-a-year monitoring
- Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring
- Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring
- Regional or local year-round monitoring
- Regional or local once-a-year monitoring
- Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring
- Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring

Respondents were aware of the following monitoring efforts by other organizations for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Statewide once-a-year monitoring
- Regional or local once-a-year monitoring
- Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring
- Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring

Respondents ranked monitoring efforts by state agencies based on their importance for conservation of wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Monitoring efforts by state agencies for conservation of wildlife in forest habitats
1	Statewide once-a-year monitoring
2	Regional or local once-a-year monitoring
3	Statewide year-round monitoring
4	Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring
5 (tie)	Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring
5 (tie)	Regional or local year-round monitoring
6 (tie)	Periodic regional or local (less than once a year

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but still regularly scheduled) monitoring

- 6 (tie) Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring

Respondents ranked monitoring efforts by other organizations based on their importance for conservation of wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Monitoring efforts by other organizations for conservation of wildlife in forest habitats
1	Statewide once-a-year monitoring
2 (tie)	Regional or local once-a-year monitoring
2 (tie)	Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring
2 (tie)	Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring
2 (tie)	Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) monitoring
3	Regional or local year-round monitoring
4	Statewide year-round monitoring
5	Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) monitoring

Respondents listed regional or local monitoring by state agencies for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Statewide basis (Bloomington DNR office)
- State parks
- Nature preserves
- Select urban areas
- State deer check stations
- Hunter harvest data on state fish and wildlife properties
- Population trends can be assessed via animals submitted to state rabies lab
- IDNR is monitoring box turtles in Martin, Brown and Morgan counties
- Red bats are monitored as part of regular bat sampling at Indianapolis International Airport, Camp Atterbury and Newport Chemical Depot
- Ongoing ecological studies of bobcats in southwestern Indiana, primarily Greene, Lawrence and Martin counties
- Small game harvest questionnaire is only survey agency conducts to monitor Indiana fox squirrel population. Survey is conducted only in odd years

Respondents listed regional or local monitoring by other organizations for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Some municipalities
- University properties
- Purdue University
- Beverly Shores
- U.S. National Lakeshore

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- Wesselman Woods (Evansville)
- Private groups have helped with counts in some state parks

Respondents listed organizations that monitor wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Universities
- Indiana State University
- Wildlife biologists at military bases
- Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
- IDNR does maintain records, databases, etc. regarding reports of bobcats throughout the state. These reports are, for the most part, unsolicited and obtained as they become available. It is not a regular, routine survey, but more of a clearinghouse for information regarding bobcat sightings, road-kills, and incidental captures, etc. It is one of the few means of monitoring low-density and wide-ranging species such as the bobcat

Respondents considered monitoring techniques for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana:

Monitoring techniques for wildlife in forest habitats	Used	Not used but possible with existing technology and data	Not economically feasible
Radio telemetry and tracking	X	X	--
Modeling	X	X	--
Coverboard routes	--	X	--
Spot mapping	X	X	--
Driving a survey route	X	X	X
Reporting from harvest, depredation, or unintentional take (road kill, by-catch)	X	X	X
Mark and recapture	X	X	X
Professional survey/census	X	X	X
Volunteer survey/census	X	X	X
Trapping (by any technique)	X	X	--
Representative sites	X	X	--
Probabilistic sites	X	X	--

Respondents noted no other monitoring techniques for wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana.

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Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the monitoring techniques for wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- yes

Habitat inventory and assessment

Respondents were aware of the following inventory and assessment efforts by state agencies for forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment

Respondents were aware of the following inventory and assessment efforts by other organizations for forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Regional or local once-a-year inventory and assessment
- Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
- Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment

Respondents ranked inventory and assessment efforts by state agencies based on their importance for conservation of forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Inventory and assessment for conservation of forest habitats by state agencies
1 (tie)	Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
1 (tie)	Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
1 (tie)	Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
2	Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment

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- 3 (tie) Regional or local year-round inventory and assessment
- 3 (tie) Regional or local once-a-year inventory and assessment
- 4 Statewide once-a-year inventory and assessment
- 5 Statewide annual inventory and assessment

Respondents ranked inventory and assessment efforts by other organizations based on their importance for conservation of forest habitats in Indiana:

Rank	Inventory and assessment for conservation of forest habitats by other organizations
1	Statewide year-round inventory and assessment
2	Periodic statewide (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
3 (tie)	Periodic regional or local (less than once a year but still regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
3 (tie)	Occasional regional or local (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
4	Statewide once-a-year inventory and assessment
5 (tie)	Occasional statewide (less than once a year and not regularly scheduled) inventory and assessment
5 (tie)	Regional or local year-round inventory and assessment
5 (tie)	Regional or local once-a-year inventory and assessment

Respondents listed regional or local inventory and assessment by state agencies for forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- State forests
- Nature preserves
- Division of Forestry (keeps track of changes in forest cover)
- IDNR
- I suspect that most, if not all, public properties in the state (Hoosier National Forest, Crane NSWC, state forests, state reservoirs, etc.) periodically inventory and assess forested habitats under their jurisdiction. Commercial timbered lands are probably also inventoried on a regular basis. The Nature Conservancy may also have access to data

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Respondents listed regional or local inventory and assessment by other organizations agencies for forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Beverly Shores
- National Lakeshore
- Hoosier National Forest
- Wesselman Woods (Evansville)
- Local planning boards monitor land use in most localities
- Indiana GAP project categories land use cover types from landsat imagery. I assume that the change in cover types is being calculated over a specified period of time

Respondents listed organizations that monitor forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Universities
- Purdue University
- In addition to state and federal agencies, I suspect Indiana Hardwood Lumberman's Association or other private groups may monitor forested lands, particularly those in private ownership
- I would assume that TNC, IDNR and other federal agencies monitor these habitats
- Indiana GAP Project

Respondents considered inventory and assessment techniques for forest habitats in Indiana:

Inventory and assessment techniques for forest habitats	Used	Not used but possible with existing technology and data	Not economically feasible
GIS mapping	X	--	--
Aerial photography and analysis	X	X	--
Systematic sampling	X	--	X
Property tax estimates	X	--	--
Regulatory information	X	--	--
Participation in land use programs	X	--	--
Modeling	X	X	--
Voluntary landowner reporting	X	--	--

Respondents listed no additional inventory and assessment techniques for forest habitats in Indiana.

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Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the inventory and assessment techniques for forest habitats. Their responses included:

- yes

Recommended monitoring

Species monitoring

Respondents recommended the following monitoring techniques for effective conservation of wildlife in forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- Reporting from harvest, depredation, or unintentional take
- Modeling (White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management, Lowell K. Halls)
- Collection of harvest data from mandatory check stations
- We need make sure someone continues to examine all animals submitted for rabies testing
- Bats: A regular monitoring program (using traps, echolocation calls, and mist nets) for bats should be initiated on a statewide basis. This should be a combined effort by IDNR, universities and private organizations
- Continued documentation of sightings, road-kills and accidental captures. Obtain pertinent biological data from recovered specimens such as age and reproductive parameters (pregnancy rate, litter size). These data could be used to model populations or build life tables in future years
- Bobcats: Some form of questionnaire or survey that is sent to trappers, hunters and professional resource managers could also be useful. The Indiana Bowhunter Survey is a good example although reporting rates for bobcats are so low they may not be effective to detect changes and monitor trends
- Box turtle: I would recommend long-term surveys and radio-telemetry of box turtle. Surveys would include mark recapture methods
- Fox squirrels: A hunter report card sent out to dedicated squirrel hunters would be a useful tool to provide an index to the fox squirrel population. I would also like to see a radio-telemetry project in northern Indiana to document fox squirrel dispersal between forest tracts. Another objective of this proposed radio-telemetry project would be to evaluate the possibility of overharvesting fox squirrel metapopulations

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the monitoring techniques for effective conservation of wildlife in forest habitats. Their responses included:

- yes

Habitat inventory and assessment

Respondents recommended the following inventory and assessment techniques for effective conservation of forest habitats in Indiana (not ranked):

- GIS mapping and aerial photo analysis
 - GIS is a logical tool to inventory and assess all aspects of forested habitats in Indiana (species composition, age and size class, ownership, management regime, etc.). It would be nice to have a GIS coverage of rock outcrops in the state to supplement forest data
 - I would recommend a GIS analysis that examines changes in land use over the last 30+ year period
- Statewide habitat mapping is needed (and mostly available if you know who to ask)
- Property tax assessments can be used as a proxy as well

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- Collect hunter data from DNR properties and private land hunters
- Universities keep record of habitat loss and habitat fragmentation

Technical experts and conservation organizations reviewed the above results and were asked if these were a reasonable representation of the inventory and assessment techniques for effective conservation of forest habitats. Their responses included:

- Yes

Technical experts and conservation organizations offered the following additional comments:

- We have to increase the level of awareness and importance of our forest habitats within the publics.