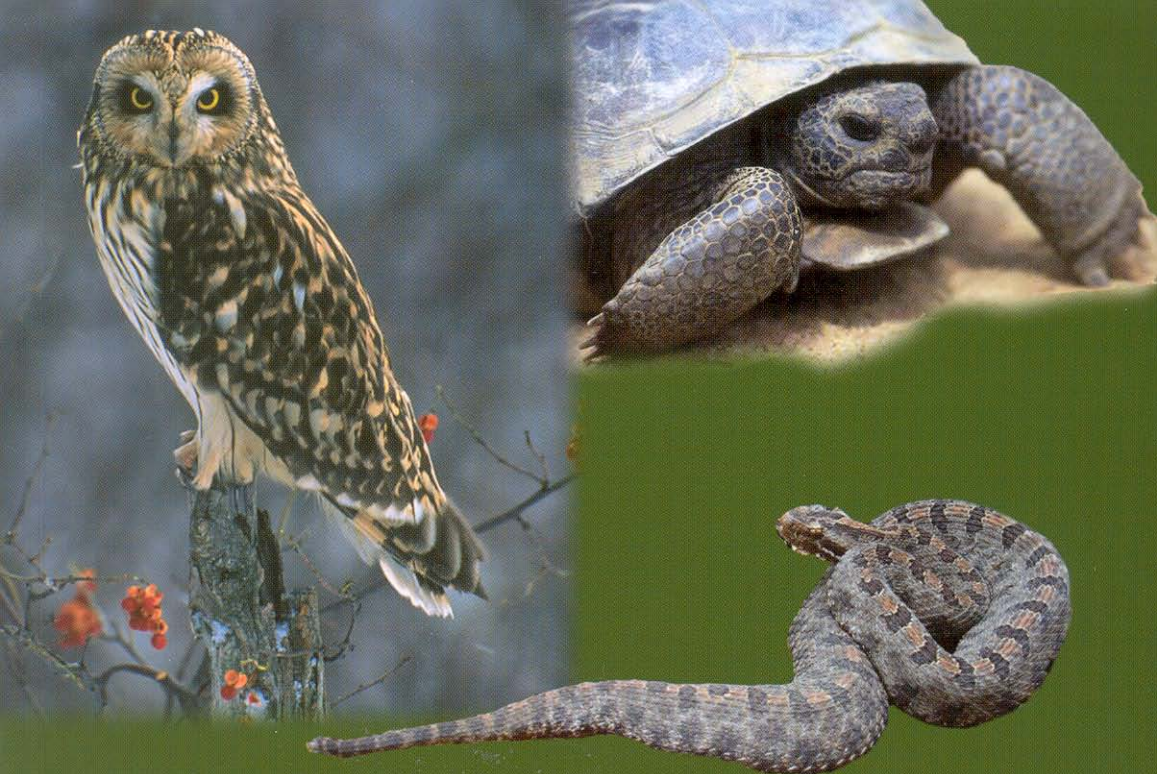




ALABAMA WILDLIFE

VOLUME THREE

**Imperiled Amphibians,
Reptiles, Birds,
and Mammals**

Edited by
Ralph E. Mirarchi
Mark A. Bailey
Thomas M. Haggerty
Troy L. Best



MAMMALS



Photo: USFWS

Black Bear
Ursus americanus

INTRODUCTION

Alabama's native mammalian fauna consists of 64 species (20 rodents, 15 bats, 14 carnivores, six insectivores, four rabbits, three ungulates, one opossum, and one armadillo), four of which have been extirpated (red wolf, puma, elk, bison). Three more species have been recorded as Accidental (ringtail, California sea lion, jaguarundi), and another (small-footed myotis) probably occurs in northern Alabama. In addition, there are introduced breeding populations of six exotic species (black rat, Norway rat, house mouse, nutria, fallow deer, feral swine). Thus, Alabama currently has viable breeding populations of 60 native and six exotic species of mammals.

Two decades ago, Alabama listed five taxa as Endangered, six as Special Concern, and five as Poorly Known. The current list contains seven taxa listed as Highest Conservation Concern, 13 species as High Conservation Concern, and four species as Extirpated. Two species previously listed as species in need of special attention are no longer listed as such because they now are deemed Accidental (California sea lion, jaguarundi). The Rafinesque's big-eared bat and black bear have been moved up in priority from Special Concern to Highest Conservation Concern, and the West Indian manatee, an endangered species that now occurs regularly along coastal Alabama, also has been added to this category. The southeastern myotis, northern yellow bat, Brazilian free-tailed bat, marsh rabbit, New England cottontail, southeastern pocket gopher, and meadow jumping mouse also were included on the previous list as Special Concern or Poorly Known. All of these species now are included as High Conservation Concern; the New England cottontail is now known as the Appalachian Cottontail. In addition, six species (pygmy shrew, little brown myotis, northern long-eared myotis, Allegheny woodrat, long-tailed weasel, eastern spotted skunk) have been added to the High Conservation Concern category because they are species with few documented occurrences in the state in recent years, or because little is known about them in Alabama.

While the raw number of taxa in need of special attention included in lists 20 years ago (16 taxa) is smaller than the list below (24 taxa), it should be emphasized that this does not necessarily mean that our mammalian fauna is in more trouble now than previously. Other than changing category names and some taxonomic changes, the net gain of about six species primarily was because we now know enough to understand that we need more information on some species. Addition of two native species

to the state's list of mammalian fauna is particularly noteworthy (pygmy shrew, West Indian manatee).

Although Alabama continues to undergo significant modification by human activities, considerable effort has been made by government and industry to minimize adverse environmental impacts. Two decades of research emphasis on endangered taxa in Alabama (*e.g.*, gray myotis, Indiana myotis, Alabama beach mouse, Perdido Key beach mouse) have yielded valuable data about the biology of these species and provide a growing database upon which sound management decisions can be made. Although studies of some other taxa listed below are in progress (*e.g.*, Rafinesque's big-eared bat, northern yellow bat, black bear, Appalachian cottontail), much more will need to be done to fully understand their habitat requirements.

In addition to the lists of Highest Conservation Concern and High Conservation Concern taxa below, at least 16 other species of mammals in Alabama are Poorly Known (northern short-tailed shrew, southern short-tailed shrew, least shrew, southeastern shrew, eastern mole, silver-haired bat, hoary bat, swamp rabbit, woodchuck, eastern harvest mouse, oldfield mouse, white-footed mouse, eastern woodrat, prairie vole, mink, river otter). These taxa along with the rest of Alabama's diverse mammalian fauna are worthy subjects for future research.