

Endangered Species at LNC

DID YOU KNOW:

Did you know that elk once lived in Missouri forests, herds of bison roamed the tallgrass prairie and gray wolves were the top predators. Passenger pigeons, the most abundant bird species ever existing, filled the skies. Missouri even had parakeets; the Carolina parakeet flourished in bottomland forests throughout the state.

We have the opportunity to help recover and conserve Missouri's biological heritage. Here at Lakeside, we shelter birds and reptiles that are listed by the Missouri Department of Conservation as 'animals of conservation concern.'

BARN OWL (*Tyto Alba*)



Barn owls do not hoot like many other owls. Instead, they make a raspy, hissing screech. Perhaps because they are white with light tan markings and can be easily seen, they do not have to call out to find each other.

Barn Owls are living mousetraps; a single barn owl may eat as many mice each year as three feral house cats. Yet they only weigh about a pound. Farmers love having barn owls because they eat the voles and mice that might otherwise eat their crops from their grain storage areas. Their incredible hearing allows them to hunt in total darkness. A mouse squeaking may attract a barn owl 1/4 of a mile away.

Endangered because of habitat loss.

These owls nest in hollow trees; abandoned buildings often provide a substitute.

YELLOW MUD TURTLE (*Kinosternon flavescens*)



The lower shell (plastron) of these turtles is a bright yellow though the upper shell is brownish. These turtles are omnivorous - they eat worms, frogs, snails, insects, slugs, pond weeds and decaying vegetation.

Like all turtles, yellow mud turtles hibernate. In times of severe summer drought, they burrow into the ground and enter a dormancy (this is called estivation). Sometimes they spend as few as 10 weeks awake. They prefer shallow, sandy habitats and spend as much time on land as in the water.

Endangered because of habitat loss.

These turtles are creatures of marshes, oxbow lakes and flooded fields.

EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*)

Massasauga means 'great river mouth' in Chippewa; the snake got its name because it is usually found in river bottom forests and nearby fields. They don't hibernate in a group like other snake species; each snake finds its own safe place for the winter.



Massasaugas eat mice and voles, other snakes, and frogs and toads. Rattlesnakes are pit vipers; heat sensitive pits under each eye alert the snake to prey or intruders. Drop for drop, the massasauga's venom is more toxic than the timber rattler's, but because of the smaller volume of venom, a bite would probably not cause severe harm to an adult human.

Endangered because of habitat loss.

The marshes and prairies these snakes prefer have been drained and plowed.