

Proposed Resolution #8
Requires Simple Majority

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MUCC region: 3 & 8

Proposed: March 12, 2022 Conservation Policy Board meeting

Title: Resolution to recommend that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, study the American Woodcock population, its habitat and develop a long-term plan to address their declining population.

1. **WHEREAS**, the American Woodcock is attracted to moist, young forests and require a young, dense woodland to
2. provide ample cover and food resources. They tend to use edges rather than the interior of big, even-age thickets;
3. and,
4. **WHEREAS**, during both migrations, they need sufficient food resources and layover sites. Courtship sites in
5. spring consists of forest clearings, abandoned fields spotted with low brush or open fields next to forest edges.
6. Sites vary in size, but a quarter of an acre seems to provide adequate space for the courtship ritual; and,
7. **WHEREAS**, Michigan's surplus growing forestry stock (annual net growth less harvests) is among the largest in
8. the nation, with forests currently growing more than twice as much wood than is being harvested each year, and
9. this trend is expected to continue; and,
10. **WHEREAS**, the modern decline of seral aspen-birch association forests has major consequences for hunting
11. interests that have become accustomed to high populations of game species that are adapted to and have thrived in
12. this habitat, including ruffed grouse, the American Woodcock, and white-tailed deer; and,
13. **WHEREAS**, the American Woodcock population is decreasing by .89 percent each year in the Central Region
14. that includes Michigan and shows a significant long term decrease according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service;
15. and,
16. **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a Conservation Plan in 2008 and detailed there has

17. been a loss of over 829,000 singing male Woodcock since the early 1970s. This corresponds to a
18. population-density deficit of over 986,000 males. Approximately 20.8 million acres (8.4 million ha) of new
19. woodcock habitat needs to be created in order to eliminate this deficit and return woodcock densities to those
20. observed during the early 1970s; and,

21. **WHEREAS**, Michigan is the top producing state for American Woodcock harvest, bands nearly 2000 chicks each
22. spring and conducts spring singing surveys for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service but is one of many states that
23. does not currently have an official plan in place to address the population and habitat loss; and,

24. **WHEREAS**, the Michigan DNR does not manage Zone Three State Recreational and State Game areas
25. specifically for wildlife including the American Woodcock habitat and this area is important as they migrate south
26. in the fall and north in the spring; and,

27. **WHEREAS**, Michigan is a premier hunting destination for this species; and,

28. **WHEREAS**, the State of Michigan depends on an \$8.9 billion hunting industry (as according to MUCCs 2017
29. Economic Impact Study) that brings tourism dollars into local, small-town communities where grouse and
30. woodcock are pursued; and,

31. **WHEREAS**, in 2015 an estimated 29,647 hunters pursued American woodcock; and,

32. **WHEREAS**, the State of Michigan leads all other states in American woodcock harvest, active American
33. woodcock hunters, and days spent afield pursuing American woodcock; and,

34. **WHEREAS**, Upland game species are considered a bellwether for other game species; and,

35. **WHEREAS**, upland game bird species are facing population declines and habitat loss; and,

36. **WHEREAS**, there are many non-profit organizations operating in the State of Michigan with direct interest in
37. maintaining stable and sustainable populations of woodcock; NOW,

38. **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) support and advocate
39. that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, study the current American Woodcock
40. population, its habitat and develop a long-term plan to address their population and habitat decline.