

## **WILDLIFE INFORMATION IN MONTANA: ACQUISITION, MANAGEMENT, AND DISSEMINATION BY THE MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM AND MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**

Bryce A. Maxell, Montana Natural Heritage Program, 1515 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620

Scott J. Story, Information Management Bureau, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks,  
1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) was established by the Montana State Legislature in 1983 and charged with statutory responsibility for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information documenting Montana's flora, fauna, and biological communities. To provide the information needed for wildlife stewardship, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) has long collected and managed data on harvested animal species, primarily at local or regional offices. Since the 1990s, information on harvested as well as federally listed animals and nongame fishes has increasingly been managed by the agency's Information Management Bureau. MNHP and MFWP started working more closely on gathering, managing, and distributing information on Montana's vertebrate animal species during the development of Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Strategy (CFWCS). After development of the CFWCS, MNHP and MFWP have continued to integrate management of information on Montana's animal species. This recently culminated in the development of an MOU which outlines the relationship and respective roles of the two agencies in the acquisition, management, and dissemination of animal information. MFWP and MNHP closely coordinate management of animal information in shared statewide databases with MFWP solely responsible for harvested species data and data associated with scientific collector's permits. MFWP takes the lead on data associated with managed nongame species while MNHP takes the lead on unmanaged nongame species. Both agencies have recently developed a variety of map products for Montana's wildlife, and these are delivered with different levels of access to the general public and agency biologists or resource managers.