

# California State Wildlife Action Plan

## Climate Change and the California State Wildlife Action Plan

**By Whitney Albright**

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) recognizes that climate change is a major challenge to the conservation of California's natural resources, and climatic changes in the state are already resulting in observed changes in natural systems. For example, migrating birds and butterflies are arriving at different times and some forest species are gradually shifting to higher elevations. Projected changes in climate, including extreme events such as fire, drought, flood, extreme temperature, and storm events, could have significant impacts on habitat, species, and human communities.

As stewards of the state's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, the CDFW is taking an active role in planning for, and responding to, the challenges posed by a changing climate. The revision to the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) provides an opportunity to help minimize the negative impacts of climate change to species and habitats by incorporating the best available climate science and adaptation strategies into this conservation blueprint for the state. California was one of the first states to include climate change in its original wildlife action plan in 2005, and CDFW is again making a significant effort to integrate climate considerations throughout the revision process.

As part of this effort, CDFW worked with partners to develop a methodology to assess the threat posed by climate change to selected conservation targets in the state. This methodology explicitly integrates climate change into the threat assessment and ratings described in the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) that is being used to update the California SWAP. This integrated threat assessment provides a basis for identifying climate adaptation strategies that minimize the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitat. The process of developing local strategies is occurring at ecoregional and watershed levels by teams of biologists. Once completed, their work will be rolled up into a state-wide strategy. A separate climate stakeholder group consisting of CDFW

staff and partners was convened to help gather the necessary climate data for this exercise and to support the ecoregional teams as they work through this process.

In addition to identifying climate impacts and adaptation strategies by ecoregion, CDFW is also working towards conducting a state-wide terrestrial, habitat-based climate vulnerability assessment and a separate marine-based climate vulnerability assessment. Currently under development, these vulnerability assessments will be presented in the revised SWAP, and will also be used to inform other work being done by CDFW to address climate change.

Integrating climate change into the 2015 SWAP revision is a necessary and important step towards implementing climate-smart conservation strategies. These considerations will help the Department to responsibly manage the state's natural resources and safeguard fish, wildlife, and habitats for future generations to enjoy.

For more information on climate change in the California SWAP, please visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/Climate\\_and\\_Energy/Climate\\_Change/Activities/SWAP.aspx](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/Climate_and_Energy/Climate_Change/Activities/SWAP.aspx)

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