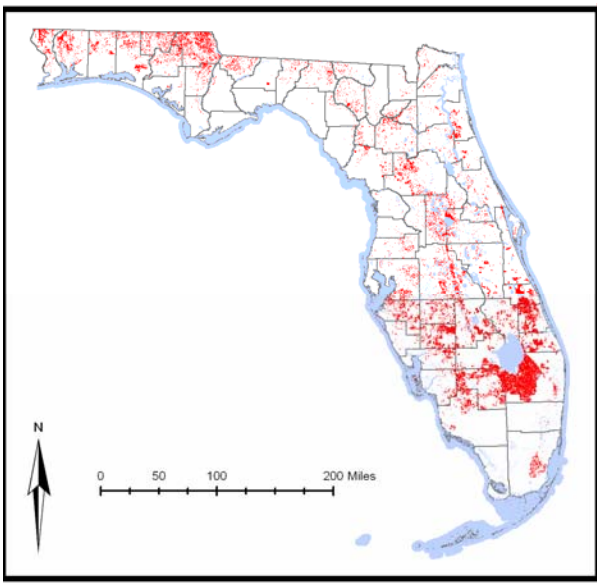
Agriculture



Some habitat distributions or locations may be misrepresented on this map due to size, resolution and insufficient data sources.

Status

Current condition: Fair and declining. According to the best available GIS information at this time (see Appendix D. GIS Data Tables), 3,101,742 acres (1,255,230 ha) of Agriculture habitat exist. An unknown amount of this habitat is protected in reserves and easements. The majority is other private lands.

Habitat Description

FNAI type: None

This category includes lands which are planted to sugar cane, citrus groves, row crops (e.g., corn, tomatoes, potatoes, cotton, beans), field crops (e.g., hay and grasses), and other agricultural uses (e.g., orchards, nurseries, vineyards, horse and dairy farms, and fallow cropland). In most agricultural areas both the natural substrates and native plant communities have been greatly disturbed as a result of human activities. At the margins of Agriculture habitat, some patches of native vegetation may remain, but those areas often have been invaded to some degree by weedy or exotic species. Pastures and hayfields may provide secondary habitat for some wildlife species adapted to similar natural ecosystems. When managed appropriately, Agriculture habitat can provide food resources for migratory birds and other wildlife. Wildlife movements benefit from row crops and groves that can contribute to a network of continuous habitat.

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Mammals

- *Lasiurus borealis* Eastern Red Bat
- *Lasiurus seminolus* Seminole Bat
- *Lasiurus intermedius* Northern Yellow Bat
- *Sylvilagus floridanus* Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
- *Sciurus niger niger* Southeastern Fox Squirrel
- *Sciurus niger shermani* Sherman's Fox Squirrel
- *Geomys pinetis pinetis* Southeastern Pocket Gopher
- *Neofiber alleni* Round-tailed Muskrat
- *Ursus americanus floridanus* Florida Black Bear
- *Mustela frenata olivacea* Southeastern Weasel
- *Mustela frenata peninsulae* Florida Long-tailed Weasel
- *Spilogale putorius* Spotted Skunk
- *Mephitis mephitis* Striped Skunk
- *Puma concolor coryi* Florida Panther

Birds

- *Anas fulvigula fulvigula* Florida Mottled Duck
- *Anas acuta* Northern Pintail
- *Egretta thula* Snowy Egret
- *Egretta caerulea* Little Blue Heron
- *Egretta tricolor* Tricolored Heron
- *Egretta rufescens* Reddish Egret
- *Nycticorax nycticorax* Black-crowned Night-Heron
- *Nyctanassa violacea* Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
- *Ajaja ajaja* Roseate Spoonbill
- *Eudocimus albus* White Ibis
- *Plegadis falcinellus* Glossy Ibis
- *Mycteria americana* Wood Stork
- *Elanoides forficatus* Swallow-tailed Kite
- *Elanus leucurus* White-tailed Kite
- *Ictinia mississippiensis* Mississippi Kite
- *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* Bald Eagle
- *Caracara cheriway* Crested Caracara
- *Falco sparverius paulus* Southeastern American Kestrel
- *Falco peregrinus* Peregrine Falcon
- *Grus canadensis pratensis* Florida Sandhill Crane
- *Grus americana* Whooping Crane
- *Recurvirostra americana* American Avocet
- *Calidris mauri* Western Sandpiper
- *Calidris melanotos* Pectoral Sandpiper
- *Columbina passerine* Common Ground-Dove
- *Athene cunicularia floridana* Florida Burrowing Owl
- *Chordeiles gundlachii* Antillean Nighthawk
- *Lanius ludovicianus* Loggerhead Shrike
- *Aphelocoma coerulescens* Florida Scrub-Jay
- *Passerina ciris* Painted Bunting
- *Sturnella magna* Eastern Meadowlark

Amphibians

- *Ambystoma tigrinum* Tiger Salamander
- *Rana capito* Gopher Frog

Reptiles

- *Terrapene carolina bauri* Florida Box Turtle
- *Gopherus polyphemus* Gopher Tortoise
- *Heterodon platirhinos* Eastern Hognose Snake
- *Drymarchon couperi* Eastern Indigo Snake
- *Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus* Florida Pine Snake
- *Lampropeltis getula* Common Kingsnake
- *Crotalus horridus* Timber Rattlesnake
- *Crotalus adamanteus* Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Invertebrates

- *Chelyoxenus xerobatis* Gopher Tortoise Hister Beetle
- *Aphodius troglodytes* Gopher Tortoise Aphodius Commensal Scarab Beetle
- *Copris gopheri* Gopher Tortoise Copris Commensal Scarab Beetle
- *Onthophagus polyphemi polyphemi* Gopher Tortoise Onthophagus Commensal Scarab Beetle

Conservation Threats

While threats to its conservation as well as remedial actions were identified during earlier workshops, the Agriculture habitat category was not addressed in the TNC workshops that generated tables of ranked threats and actions, as seen in most other habitat categories. The decision to not rank threats and actions for this habitat was made (1) to maximize discussion time for higher-priority habitats and (2) because of some disagreement over recognition of this habitat type as important to wildlife conservation. Therefore, threats and actions are presented as simple bulleted lists, arranged in alphabetical order, with no prioritization.

The following stresses threaten this habitat:

- Altered community structure
- Altered fire regime - timing, frequency, intensity, extent
- Altered hydrologic regime - timing, duration, frequency, extent
- Altered landscape pattern or mosaic
- Altered soil structure & chemistry
- Altered species composition/dominance
- Altered successional dynamics
- Altered water and/or soil temperature
- Altered water quality of surface water or aquifer: contaminants
- Altered water quality of surface water or aquifer: nutrients
- Erosion/sedimentation
- Excessive depredation and/or parasitism
- Fragmentation of habitats, communities, ecosystems
- Habitat degradation/disturbance

The sources of stress, or threats, were used to generate conservation actions:

- Chemicals and toxins
- Conversion to commercial and industrial development
- Conversion to housing and urban development
- Incompatible fire
- Incompatible recreational activities
- Invasive animals
- Invasive plants
- Management of nature impoundments
- Nuisance animals
- Nutrient loads
- Parasites/pathogens
- Solid waste

Conservation Actions

Actions to abate threats to Agriculture were designed to reduce the impacts of agricultural activities and increase the habitat's suitability to wildlife. Many threats were statewide (Chemicals and toxins, Conversion to commercial and industrial development, Conversion to housing and urban development, Incompatible fire, Incompatible recreational activities, Invasive animals, Invasive plants, and Nutrient loads).

The actions to abate threats that were identified for Agriculture are below, though none were prioritized for implementation.

Land/Water Protection

- Acquire open space with an emphasis on greenways and network of contiguous habitats
- Conserve wildlife-suitable agricultural lands through conservation easements

Land/Water/Species Management

- Restore hydrology by removing ditches, levees, and dams
- Better fire management of rangelands
- Control exotic plants and animals
- Develop and follow Best Management Practices
- Enroll lands in landowner incentive programs
- Reduce amount of pesticide and fertilizer use

Research, Education and Awareness

- Increase public/private training and awareness about value of these lands
- Continue to educate landowners about the proper use of BMPs
- Research plans for restoration of this habitat and its hydrology
- Research and educate landowners about management practices for controlling invasive species

Economic and Other Incentives

- Provide landowner incentive (public and private) for protection and restoration of habitat

Capacity Building

- Form and facilitate partnerships, alliances and networks of organizations willing to research, conserve, and manage this habitat