

Minnesota's Nongame Wildlife Checkoff

What is the nongame wildlife checkoff?

Minnesota's nongame wildlife checkoff allows individuals to make contributions on their individual income tax or property tax refund return to the state's nongame wildlife fund. Corporate taxpayers may also contribute on their corporate franchise tax returns. Taxpayers who wish to contribute fill in the amount of their contribution on their income tax or property tax refund form. The amount of the contribution is then either added to their tax due or subtracted from their refund. The checkoff was enacted and first appeared on tax forms in 1980.

How much do taxpayers contribute to the nongame wildlife checkoff?

In 2010, over 62,000 individuals used the nongame wildlife checkoff to contribute just over \$1 million to the nongame wildlife fund on their individual income tax or property tax refund forms. The average contribution was about \$17. About 1.9 percent of all filers made contributions—2.0 percent of income tax filers and 1.3 percent of property tax refund filers. Since 1998, taxpayers have contributed about \$1 million per year through the checkoff, but the share of filers making contributions has decreased.

Nongame Wildlife Checkoff Contributions, 1998 to 2010

Year	% contributing	\$ contributed	Average contribution
1998	2.9%	\$972,996	\$11.41
1999	2.0	1,003,721	12.01
2000	2.9	1,028,790	12.16
2001	3.0	1,134,319	13.23
2002	3.0	1,160,518	13.07
2003	3.0	1,154,574	13.11
2004	2.8	1,171,942	13.75
2005	2.6	1,098,310	14.12
2006	2.1	1,030,219	15.31
2007	2.1	1,075,785	15.34
2008	2.1	1,093,113	15.46
2009	2.1	1,086,545	15.72
2010	1.9	1,061,164	17.09

Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue

What are contributions to the checkoff used for?

Contributions to the nongame wildlife checkoff go into the nongame wildlife fund and are appropriated to the Department of Natural Resources for its nongame wildlife program. Although donations from the nongame wildlife checkoff provide the majority of the funding for the nongame wildlife program, the program also receives funding from the general fund, the game and fish fund, and other sources.

The nongame wildlife program focuses on nongame wildlife species that have been identified as being rare, declining, or vulnerable in the state; these species are

known as “species of greatest conservation need.” The program supports six regional wildlife specialists who work toward three major goals designed to protect these species:

- Stabilizing and increasing the populations of the species
- Improving knowledge of the species
- Enhancing people’s appreciation and enjoyment of the species

What are some recent projects funded through the nongame wildlife checkoff?

The nongame wildlife program has supported a number of projects in recent years, including the Project WILD program, which is an environmental and conservation education program designed to train K-12 and other youth and environmental educators on how to develop awareness of and foster responsible actions towards wildlife and related natural resources. Other projects have included surveys of various species including loons, bald eagles, frogs, and dragonflies, and the acquisition of lands for various wildlife management areas and aquatic management areas across the state to provide habitat for many wildlife species.

How many other states have a nongame wildlife checkoff?

Thirty-six of the 42 states (and the District of Columbia) that have an individual income tax also have a nongame wildlife checkoff. Most states have more than one checkoff; Oregon has the most, with 27. Only three states offer only the nongame wildlife checkoff—Indiana, Minnesota, and North Carolina.

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