Young Forest Initiative

Wildlife Needs Young Forest Habitat

John Coleman
State/Federal Agencies Recognize Need for Young Forest Structure

**Increase in Early-Successional Habitat Warranted:**

- Northern BCR 28 (VA, MD, WV, PA, & NY) *State Wildlife Action Plans* list **87 species** of “Greatest Conservation Need” that **require shrubland habitats** for survival.

- USFWS has named the Am. Woodcock as a national focus species.

- Partners In Flight and North American Bird Conservation Initiative ranked woodcock as a highest (global) priority species in need of conservation action.
Changes in American Woodcock Abundance

Unpublished Singing Ground Survey Data
John Sauer, USGS
Number of Woodcock Heard on the Singing Ground Survey 1968-2006

(56% decline)

### Change in Singing Male Woodcock from 1970 to 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>OH</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>VA</th>
<th>WV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># Singing Males in 1970</strong></td>
<td>2,518</td>
<td>17,540</td>
<td>71,497</td>
<td>13,068</td>
<td>31,120</td>
<td>135,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Singing Males in 2005</strong></td>
<td>1,099</td>
<td>8,741</td>
<td>42,030</td>
<td>4,284</td>
<td>13,898</td>
<td>70,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>-1,419</td>
<td>-8,799</td>
<td>-29,467</td>
<td>-8,784</td>
<td>-17,222</td>
<td>-65,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Change</strong></td>
<td>-56</td>
<td>-50</td>
<td>-41</td>
<td>-67</td>
<td>-55</td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SWAPs Identify Need for Young Forest Structure

States within “Young Forest Initiatives” list 75 species that require young forest and shrubland habitats as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. (57 birds, 7 reptiles/amphibians, and 11 mammals in deciduous and coniferous forest types)

Examples of avian species preferences

After a clearcut, the stage of regeneration affects how long the forest is suitable habitat for different species of birds. Herbaceous plants, shrubs, vines and saplings grow rapidly in the stand initiation period following the harvest. Many early successional species prefer this period because of the dense woody understory that provides cover and nesting substrate. Once the saplings grow to young trees and form a closed canopy, the woody understory decreases. Some early successional birds prefer the dense cover in this period of stand initiation.

(Oliver & Larson; Thompson et al. 1996; DeGraaf & Yamazaki 2003)
Consequences of the Debate Over Forest Management Methods

Shrublands and early successional habitats becoming rarer

- Species are declining because of the loss of young forest habitats
Forest Structure

Current Stand Size Distribution

Note: Virginia’s data reflects a dramatically pine shorter rotation in the east.
## Age class distribution GWNF
From table of past activities (Sept 2010) in Forest Plan revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stand Age</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>10,304</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>22,754</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>31,379</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>32,512</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>22,236</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>3,212</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>5,579</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>29,893</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>99,426</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>214,981</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-110</td>
<td>229,501</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111-120</td>
<td>113,435</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121-130</td>
<td>76,982</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131-150+</td>
<td>157,024</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,049,218</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1978-81 Early Successional Management Study

**Birds that Increased**
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Northern Flicker
- Eastern Wood Peewee
- Common Raven
- American Robin
- Northern Parula
- Nashville Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Black and White Warbler
- American Redstart
- Mourning Warbler
- Common yellowthroat
- White-throated Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco

**Birds that Decreased**
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Cape May Warbler

Management Works!
Woodcock Singing Ground Survey
(Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge)
Hardwood cutovers on flatlands = woodcock nest & brood habitat (& quail habitat)
Excellent Roosting Field
Log Landings = Singing Grounds
IDEAL Woodcock Habitat
10,000 stems/acre
Conversion of cool season grasses
Close up of planting rape, clovers and WSGs
Field Border
Field Border Thicket
Young Forest Initiatives

Supports SFI Biological Diversity Standard
(including old growth, habitats of T&E species, Forest of Exceptional Conservation Value, and Activities to limit invasive plants and Animals)

► WMI developed & published voluntary BMPs that promote methods to optimize management for early successional species
  ▪ BMPs that allow ESH goals to be attained where appropriate and in context of other biodiversity-related elements
Technical Assistance Available

Experienced habitat biologists will provide:

► Consultations with SFI Program Participants
► Assessments of forestlands for ESH opportunities
  (propriety stays propriety)
► Workshops & best management plan training
► Demonstration areas where BMP application can be viewed
► Opportunity for web-based communications
  (www.timberdoodle.org)
We welcome the opportunity to discuss management options to benefit young forest wildlife in decline.

Contact Information:

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End of a Great Day