

Talking About Young Forests

A Communication Handbook



Talking About Young Forests: A Communication Handbook

Published by the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, a partner in the Wildlife Management Institute's Young Forest Project: Growing Wildlife Habitat Together, www.youngforest.org

Financial Support for this Handbook Came From:

- The Wildlife Management Institute
- The Ruffed Grouse Society
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- West Virginia Department of Natural Resources
- New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
- Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Cornell University
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- The Nature Conservancy
- Woodcock Limited
- UP Wildlife Habitat Fund

Contributing Authors

- Jim Oehler, State Lands Habitat Biologist, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
- Neil Gifford, Conservation Director, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission
- Chuck Fergus, The Wildlife Management Institute
- Terri Edwards, Chief of Public Affairs, Northeast Regional Office, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Meagan Racey, Communications Specialist, Endangered Species and Habitat Conservation, Northeast Regional Office, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Shorna Allred, Associate Professor and Associate Director, Human Dimensions Research Unit, Dept. of Natural Resources, Cornell University

Cover Photos

Front cover clockwise: Pine Bush hikers, E. Craney; brown thrasher, Ed Guthro; aspen-birch forest, James Oehler; wood turtle, Jonathan Mays; shrubby field swamp, Bill Byrne; black rat snake, Wikimedia Commons. Back cover: Wisconsin young forest, James Oehler.

This publication was generated in support of the Northeast Young Forest Communications Strategy developed by the Northeast Habitat Technical Committee and the Northeast Conservation Information and Education Association – committees within the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Agencies and organizations that participated in the development of the strategy and the review of this publication include (in alphabetical order): Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, Cornell University, Department of Natural Resources, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, New York Department of Conservation, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Ruffed Grouse Society, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Management Institute.



Table of Contents

Why is Young Forest Important?	1
Young Forest Habitats Defined	3
Why is This Handbook Needed?	6
Talking with the Public	9
Talking to Landowners	17
Talking to Decision-Makers	22
Talking to the Media	23
What's on the Web	28
Endnotes	30
Appendix A	32

Characterized by few or no mature trees, young forest includes a diverse mix of shrubs and/or tree seedlings and saplings, along with openings where grasses and wildflowers grow. Today, this important habitat type is dwindling throughout our region.



Ruffed grouse. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Why is Young Forest Important?

To meet the conservation goals of state Wildlife Action Plans for declining wildlife, natural resource professionals must effectively advocate for creating and managing young forest habitat on public and private lands.

The landscape of the northeastern United States is known for its seemingly boundless woodlands and its fertile farms. Wherever we look, we see verdant fields and pastures, or majestic tall trees. They not only provide the beautiful backdrop to our region, but also important habitats that many wildlife depend on. Another type of habitat that is just as important to the region is one that might be called “in-between” habitat. This sort of habitat, also known as young forest, is critically needed by many kinds of wildlife. Characterized by few or no mature trees, young forest includes a diverse mix of shrubs and/or tree seedlings and saplings, along with openings where grasses and wildflowers grow. Today, this important habitat type is dwindling throughout our region.

Young forest currently makes up around 10 percent of the land area in the Mid-Atlantic and 21 percent of the land area in New England. However, more than 70 percent of the young forest in New England is in Maine,^{1,2} which is outside the range of many of the young forest creatures whose populations are falling – animals such as the blue-winged warbler, hognose snake, box turtle, and Karner blue butterfly, to name but a few. To meet the conservation goals of state Wildlife Action Plans for these and other declining wildlife, natural resource professionals must effectively advocate for creating and managing young forest habitat on public and private lands.

The need for young forests is great. The populations of at least 89 birds, mammals, and reptiles (see Appendix A, page 32) have fallen significantly over the past century because of an ongoing

decline in the amount of this important habitat.^{3,4} Current conservation plans call for creating over 600,000 acres of young forest annually in the Northeast to restore populations of ruffed grouse and American woodcock.^{5,6} Hundreds of thousands of acres of young forest are needed to safeguard populations of many songbirds, including golden-winged warblers, eastern towhees, Nashville warblers, brown thrashers, and prairie warblers.⁷ Surveys show that young forest birds as a group are especially at risk in the Northeast.⁸ In New England and the Mid-Atlantic, two-thirds of young forest bird species experienced significant population declines between 1966 and 2010. In comparison, less than a quarter of woodland birds showed significant declines during the same period.

Many agencies and organizations are working diligently to restore and maintain the thousands of acres of native pine barrens that support some of our rarest species, including the endangered Karner blue butterfly and numerous songbirds. Many biologists consider pine barrens the most probable “original” nesting habitat for many young forest birds in the region.⁹ Likewise, a major effort is underway to restore thousands of acres of young forest for the New England cottontail, a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.¹⁰

Young forests are also important to animals often thought of as woodland dwellers: It's nature's pantry for many kinds of birds, mammals, and reptiles.^{11,12,13} The abundant insects and berries produced in young forest help newly fledged birds quickly grow and fuel up for a successful southward

migration in autumn. Black bears may use woodland, but they also frequent young forest to gorge on berries, building up fat reserves before hibernating in their winter dens. Moose depend on food provided by the dense woody shoots of young trees and shrubs. Snakes hunt for deer mice, chipmunks, and other small mammals that are themselves drawn to patches of young forest to find meals of their own.

To make sure we have enough of this habitat, conservationists like yourself can educate and enlist public and private landowners, as well as those who advise and assist them, to restore young forest in a smart, forward-looking, and sustainable way. As a professional who may often work with landowners, property managers, or foresters, or as an educator who communicates with the public, you are uniquely poised to help gain the acceptance of habitat management actions needed to ensure healthy populations of our native young forest wildlife.

This handbook gives you tools and advice on how best to explain what young forest is, why it's so important to wildlife, and why and how conservationists are hard at work creating, restoring, and managing this kind of habitat. It explains how to use words and concepts that will resonate with different audiences, including language that landowners themselves use to talk about their land. Building relationships with landowners is critical in making enough young forest to help our wildlife.

Your tool kit will include a PowerPoint presentation, a video, and a pamphlet (all downloadable from the website www.youngforest.org). These tools will help you communicate to a variety of audiences this key concept: "Young



Credit: Malin Clyde.

forests provide habitat for thriving and diverse wildlife while offering unique recreational opportunities and economic benefits to your community."

It is only with the help of individuals – whether by creating young forest on land they own, or simply by not opposing habitat management on other lands – that conservationists can ensure that enough of this special habitat will be available today and in the future. Through the efforts of natural resource professionals like you, we can ensure a range of wildlife for the enjoyment and education of our children and generations to come.

We have abundant mature forest in the Northeast; today we need more young forest for wildlife that requires younger woodland growth.



Young Forest Habitats Defined

Natural resource professionals often refer to these regrowing areas as “early successional habitat.” Nowadays, many are switching to the simpler, easier-to-understand term “young forest.”



Old field. Credit: James Oehler.

Young forest habitats are dominated by young trees and shrubs often intermixed with small patches of grasses and wildflowers. These habitats are created across the landscape through repeated disturbances to the forest, caused either by humans, through practices such as timber harvesting, disking, or mowing down shrubs, or brought about by natural processes that remove mature trees, including fires, floods, and high winds. Disturbed areas are quickly colonized by new vegetation springing up from the root systems of toppled trees and shrubs, or by the seeds, carried in by wind, water, or wildlife, of plants adapted to growing in full sunlight.

Natural resource professionals sometimes refer to these regrowing areas as “early successional habitat.” Nowadays, many are switching to the simpler, easier-to-understand term “young forest.” Communications specialists of all disciplines stress the importance of using common language rather than jargon like “early successional” that can quickly turn off an audience.^{14,15} Surveys and landowner polling have shown that the people we need to reach identify more readily with the term “young forest,” because it invokes a sense of a healthy, vigorous ecosystem.¹⁴

Some types of young forest habitats include:

Shrub Swamps – Shrub swamps typically exist along slow-moving stretches of rivers and streams that are periodically dammed by beavers. After the beavers use up local food supplies, they abandon their ponds and move on. Eventually, their dams collapse and the water drains out. An old beaver pond will gradually turn into a wet meadow and – absent further beaver activity – later becomes a shrub swamp supporting highbush blueberry, dogwoods, winterberry, alder, and other wetland-loving shrubs that can persist for many years or even decades before being colonized by trees, such as red maple, that can tolerate wet soils.

Old Farm Fields – During the last century, many abandoned fields became overgrown with shrubs and young trees, offering an effective and important substitute for many of our naturally occurring young forest habitats. However, many old fields have now grown to become older forest or have been developed for housing and other human uses. Existing old fields can be kept in a state friendly to young forest wildlife through management techniques that include mowing, disking, removing trees, prescribed burning, grazing by animals, and the careful use of herbicides. If not maintained every 5 to 10 years, old fields will eventually grow into closed-canopy forest no longer suitable for young forest wildlife.

Pine Barrens – A pine barrens habitat is composed of dense shrubs and small trees, including blueberry and scrub oak, along with scattered pitch pines, oak trees, and openings of prairie grasses and wildflowers, generally rooted in sandy soil. In the past, fires set by lightning and Native Americans renewed such areas. Today, trained professional fire crews use periodic prescribed, or planned, fires, often in combination with other techniques, to maintain this globally rare habitat that is home to many scarce animals and plants uniquely adapted to living in this environment. Pine barrens can persist as young forest habitat for many decades with proper management. Without management, pine barrens will grow into closed-canopy forest dominated by oak trees and white pine (a species that does not tolerate fire).

Aspen-Birch Forest – Aspen and birch produce abundant lightweight seeds that are easily dispersed by wind and water. Seedlings that sprout from these highly mobile seeds do not like shade, and grow best in moist soils. Historically, woodlands dominated by aspen and birch probably grew most often in areas that had been swept by wildfires or next to rivers and streams where trees had been removed by flooding or ice scour. Today we limit such natural disturbances through fire suppression and dams (over 28,000 dams exist on waterways in the Northeast).¹⁶ Now most aspen and birch stands are renewed and maintained through timber harvesting.

Regenerating Timber Harvests

The patches of new forest that quickly spring up following many types of timber

Aspen and birch produce abundant lightweight seeds that are easily dispersed by wind and water. Seedlings that sprout from these highly mobile seeds do not like shade, and grow best in moist soils.



Regenerating aspen-birch forest. Credit: James Oehler.

Keeping enough young forest around is essential to maintaining the health and diversity of our region's habitats and our rich wildlife heritage now and for many years to come.

harvests can provide young forest wildlife with abundant food and cover. However, only those harvests that remove all or a significant portion of the forest canopy will result in the type of habitat required by young forest wildlife. In technical terms, these types of harvests include shelterwood, seed tree, and clearcuts, which mimic natural catastrophic ice and windstorm damage. Aspen-birch forest and regenerating timber harvests are most beneficial to young forest wildlife for the first 10 to 20 years after disturbance (natural or man-made). After that, it becomes better habitat for wildlife that require older woodlands. To benefit a broad range of wild creatures,

conservationists can create a mosaic of different-aged habitats on a given tract of land.

No matter where you live, or what the habitats described above may be called, creating and periodically rejuvenating young forest is key to meeting the conservation goals in many wildlife conservation plans, including the Wildlife Action Plans of all 13 northeastern states. Keeping enough young forest around is essential to maintaining the health and diversity of our region's habitats and our rich wildlife heritage now and for many years to come.

Making Habitat Responsibly

It's important to identify areas where we can help wild animals by creating young forest. It's also important to understand where we should not conduct this kind of habitat management – and to let the public know that we as conservationists are not advocating making young forest everywhere.

For example, a timber harvest on steep slopes should be avoided, since it can cause erosion. Cutting trees that cast shade on vernal ponds may cause those important natural habitats to dry up in springtime, stranding young salamanders and frogs before they've had time to sufficiently develop. And whole-scale clearing of hundreds or thousands of acres in one location can do more environmental harm than good.

Providing a mosaic of habitats that contains a mix of young and old forest interspersed with fields and wetlands is the key. Wildlife biologists generally recommend keeping 5 to 10 percent of a given landscape in young forest habitat with minimum patch sizes of 5 acres in New England and 10 acres in the Mid-Atlantic region. Certain kinds of wildlife, like the New England cottontail and golden-winged warbler, may require larger patches.

Qualified natural resources specialists, including state, federal, and non-governmental organization private-lands habitat biologists, employees of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and foresters with wildlife training can help landowners and property managers decide what will work best on a given property – plus guide them toward funding that may pay for habitat enhancement.

As stewards of natural resources, forward-thinking conservationists keep diversity in mind as they work to plan and integrate different management activities to help *all* wildlife – not just those that need young forest.

Why is This Handbook Needed?

“I thought a preserve was supposed to be a place where you protect nature. Why did you cut down all those trees?”

“What will happen to the wildlife once you’ve burned their habitat?”

“Why can’t we just let nature run its course?”

If you’ve ever fielded questions like these, this handbook is for you. Convincing the public that the tree harvest or prescribed burn that they see as destruction can be, in fact, an effective way to recreate a natural process – one that will benefit a range of wildlife – can be a daunting task. Public misconceptions run deep, and entrenched attitudes can be hard to change. This handbook will help you answer many of the questions people will inevitably ask concerning the need to make young forest in your town, county, or state.

The public’s alarm at sudden changes in the look of a forest following a timber harvest or prescribed fire should not be surprising, since restoring and conserving the region’s woodlands has long been a major goal. For many years, conservationists justifiably focused on restoring woodlands to landscapes that had essentially been stripped of trees by the early twentieth century. Now, as we begin the twenty-first century, we understand that the return of ample woodland has benefited some species while putting others in jeopardy as those forests have matured. There are currently at least 89 species of wildlife classified as “species of greatest

conservation need” that require young forest habitat to survive and breed (see Appendix A, page 32). Many other kinds of wildlife, including those found more often in woodlands, also venture into young forest habitats for many of their life needs.

People Can Help

Making enough young forest habitat today calls for human intervention.

In times past, young forest habitats were naturally created and maintained by fires, floods, insect pests, and diseases, all of which our society limits to protect human life and property. Farmland abandoned in the early twentieth century temporarily provided young forest as shrubs and trees invaded old fields. Today most of those old fields have either sprouted trees or houses. And, since natural disturbances can no longer run their course in our region’s increasingly developed landscapes, we now need to actively create young forest habitat in other ways.

Managing land to favor young forest wildlife can appear heavy-handed and even destructive – seemingly in

“Opposition to young forest habitat management is the number one barrier to successful implementation of woodcock and ruffed grouse conservation plans.”

– Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Habitat Technical Committee



Credit: Malin Clyde.

Young forests provide essential homes for a wide variety of native wildlife in the Northeast.



Prairie warbler.
Credit: Wolfgang Wander.



American woodcock.
Credit: Vic Peters.

direct opposition to what the public considers “conservation.” This attitude on the part of many concerned citizens makes it hard for conservationists to put into practice the kinds of management needed to protect the longterm survival of young forest wildlife. Some states have even passed policies severely limiting timber harvesting and other forest-management techniques, which could further the decline of young forest habitat and the wildlife that depends on it.^{17,18} It’s clear that the public must reach a new understanding of why young forest habitat management is necessary to ensure the survival of a diversity of wildlife, including many cherished birds, mammals, and reptiles.

This handbook will be useful for anyone engaged in conservation in the northeastern United States: professional and amateur wildlife biologists, ecologists, foresters, persons charged with managing both private and public land, and environmental educators. Some conservationists have had training in public speaking and how to sell stories to the media or approach important decision-makers, but for most, this is new territory. Please read the following pages and use the tools available on www.youngforest.org to develop your skills and confidence and become a better communicator about wildlife and the young forest habitat that so many animals need.

Young Forest Success Stories

Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Albany, New York

Albany Pine Bush Preserve protects a pitch-pine and scrub-oak barrens a scant six miles from New York’s capitol building. Creating young forest has helped many birds that rely on this habitat at the preserve. During ten breeding bird surveys completed before management began, conservationists found no young forest birds using a 50-acre forested tract grown up with non-native black locust trees. After the tract was clearcut in 2008, a dense, resprouting young forest quickly attracted prairie warblers, indigo buntings, yellowthroats, field sparrows, kingbirds, towhees, bluebirds, brown thrashers, song sparrows, gray catbirds, and more – all actively producing new generations of young forest birds.

Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, Calais, Maine

From 1937, when this 35,000-acre refuge was established, until 1975, fewer than 370 acres of woodland were harvested. By the 1970s, the forest had matured beyond the optimum for woodcock and other young forest wildlife whose populations were falling. This all changed in 1980, when conservationists set in motion a management plan that designated approximately a third of the refuge for active forest management to benefit a diversity of forest wildlife, with an emphasis on helping the American woodcock. The plan called for creating up to 130 acres of young forest annually through clearcutting 5-acre patches of hardwoods. Within five years, the number of adult male woodcock increased by 77 percent. More than 30 years later, woodcock numbers continue to be strong in managed areas; populations of songbirds that depend on young forest, such as the chestnut-sided warbler and American redstart, have stayed stable or have risen on Moosehorn while declining at the state and regional levels. Birds that breed in more-mature woods also use the cutover areas in late summer and early fall, feeding on the nutrient-rich fruits of small trees and shrubs, including pin cherry, dogwood, and juneberry.

Declining Species

Golden-Winged Warbler

The population of the golden-winged warbler, which relies on shrubby old fields and wetlands, has fallen by around 3.5 percent per year across the United States. This colorful bird is gone from 11 states where it had occurred for at least the last century. If we don't make habitat for these colorful birds, they'll continue to decline in areas where they now remain.



Credit: Jeff Tash.

Karner Blue Butterfly

Once widespread and common throughout much of Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, and parts of ten other states, the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly now occurs only in small disjunct islands of pine barrens in Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, and New Hampshire. Pine barrens are a type of young forest composed of dense shrubs, scattered pitch pines, and openings of prairie grass and wildflowers, rooted in sandy soil and best maintained through controlled burns.



Credit: The Nature Conservancy of Eastern NY.

Bobcat

Bobcats are a species of conservation concern throughout much of the Northeast. Populations are vulnerable in areas that have seen the loss of young forest habitats. Young forest provides food and cover for the smaller animals that bobcats commonly hunt, including small rodents, rabbits, and hares.

American Woodcock

The number of male woodcock heard singing on their breeding grounds each spring has dropped 56 percent over the last 40 years in the eastern United States – a decline that reflects an overall dwindling of the species' population. Most scientists agree it is not hunting but an ongoing loss of young forest habitat that has caused this drastic decline.



Golden-winged warbler.
Credit: Laurie Johnson.



New England cottontail.
Credit: John Greene.



Karner blue butterfly.
Credit: Joel Trick, USFWS.



Bobcat.
Credit: Gary Kramer, USFWS.



American woodcock.
Credit: Chuck Fergus.

Talking with the Public

(including members of outdoor recreation and environmental organizations, garden clubs, hunters, educators, students, and concerned citizens)

As you develop and refine the skills needed to convey several major themes, we'll offer suggestions for addressing some of the potentially controversial aspects of managing for young forest.

Speaking with people can be a big challenge. While certain audiences may be focused on one principle issue (such as economics, ecology, agriculture, aesthetics, politics, or wildlife), their motivations and level of understanding are likely to be diverse and may be difficult to gauge. For this reason, we'll focus our discussion on a few key talking points and communications strategies about young forests. As you develop and refine the skills needed to convey several major themes, we'll offer suggestions for addressing some of the potentially controversial aspects of managing for young forest.

be practical or feasible. And as you may have already experienced firsthand, public opposition to habitat management can keep important conservation projects from taking place.

Managing habitat for wildlife is complicated. To do the job well, a conservationist needs to understand principles of biological disturbance, habitat requirements of different species, and effects on ecosystems and wildlife diversity of even- and uneven-aged forestry practices, prescribed burning, the use of herbicides, and more. It can take years for a resource manager to fully comprehend and integrate these and other concepts – so we can hardly expect people to grasp right away why we do what we do to help wildlife.

Achieving “informed consent” (i.e., your audience understands the benefits of young forest habitat well enough that they will not oppose management to create or restore it) is a realistic and valuable goal. Informed consent can grow out of a level of understanding that causes people to support or at least not oppose the use of practices that conservationists consider biologically necessary. By conveying some basic knowledge, we can demonstrate to the public that natural resources professionals are caring stewards who consider the range of economic, ecological, aesthetic, and emotional costs and benefits of the management actions that they prescribe for the land.



Credit: Toby Alexander.

Informed Consent

You probably entered your chosen field to protect and improve our region's natural resources and wild places by working directly with those resources and building public support for conserving and managing them. We'd all like to find broad public support for making young forest habitat, but that may not

The Bleiker Life Preserver

A Shorthand Approach to Consent Building

Whatever you say, whatever you write, whatever you do, make sure that your audience understands these four points:

1. There is a serious Problem . . . or Opportunity . . . *one that just has to be addressed.*
2. You are *the right entity* to be addressing this problem . . . in fact, given your Mission, it would be *irresponsible* for you not to address this problem.
3. The way you are going about it, the approach you're using, is *reasonable, sensible, responsible.*
4. You are listening, you do care; if what you're proposing is going to hurt someone, *it's not because you don't care, and it's not because you're not listening.*

The Institute for Participatory Management and Planning: www.ipmp-bleiker.com

Strategies for Effective Communication

Use the guidelines below to avoid some common pitfalls when discussing potentially controversial young forest habitat management techniques such as clearcut timber harvesting and controlled burning.

Communication DO's

- Present concepts at least three times and in several ways, such as statistics, graphs, illustrations, photographs, and anecdotes. Remember that people learn in different ways, and no one method will reach everyone effectively.
- Speak and write as though you are communicating with middle school students, as illustrated by this publication. Don't talk down to your audience, but explain things in an honest, straightforward, and understandable way.
- Use familiar nontechnical words and phrases like woods, woodlands, woodlots, woodland owners and landowners, wildlife, recreation, enjoy the land, take care of the land, harvest trees, and keep the forest healthy.
- Use the common names of plants and animals rather than technical terms like ungulates or avian species, and stay away from Latin binomials.
- Recognize that people have strong and often emotional ties to land, whether it is their own land or public land that they frequently visit.
- Provide opportunities for hands-on interpretive activities, such as springtime bird walks, as well as guided, in-the-field learning experiences that reveal how young forests help wildlife.

By conveying some basic knowledge, we can demonstrate to the public that natural resources professionals are caring stewards who consider the range of economic, ecological, aesthetic, and emotional costs and benefits of the management actions that they prescribe for the land.

Explain that management solutions will vary from place to place depending on geography, forest type, the kinds of wildlife that may be affected, and local habitat needs.

- Help develop and publicize habitat demonstration areas where landowners can visit young forest and see how wildlife responds to this habitat.
- Use compelling science and facts to show how wild creatures need and use young forests, while remembering to avoid getting too technical. Draw your language and examples from this publication and from the website www.youngforest.org. (Additional resources are also listed at the end of this handbook.)
- Highlight solutions, and provide examples of how prescribed fire, timber harvests, disking, and mowing can all mimic natural disturbances and can safely provide young forest even in developed landscapes.
- Acknowledge that young forest is not needed everywhere. Explain that management solutions will vary from place to place depending on geography, forest type, the kinds of wildlife that may be affected, and local habitat needs.



Credit: James Oehler.

Explain how to identify areas where it makes sense to help young forest wildlife by managing their habitat, plus the importance of knowing where not to create young forest – places like steep slopes (where erosion can result), woods around vernal pools (to prevent these important pocket wetlands from drying up), and stands of trees that should be left alone or managed through different means (either to produce valuable sawlogs in the future or simply to keep a large expanse of woodland intact in an area that may already have enough young forest).

- Focus on the benefits most important to your audience. When talking about young forest to a bird club, explain the advantages to birds – and birders – that come from having diverse habitats that include young forest. When addressing a hunting group, point out how young forest boosts the numbers of many game animals, which in turn leads to greater hunting opportunities. Other benefits include reversing wildlife population declines and improving opportunities to view wildlife, an activity that many families enjoy. Point out how managing land for young forest can also generate valuable forest products and create jobs.
- Be candid about possible negative effects. Creating and maintaining young forest through timber harvesting can yield revenue, whereas creating it in other ways takes time and costs money that might otherwise go to different conservation projects, such as buying land for wildlife. Informed consent will grow out of an audience or group accepting you as an honest, wise conservationist. Even if people don't necessarily agree with all that you say or completely understand the



Moose. Credit: Martin Cathrae

science behind management strategies, if you state your case carefully and confidently, most will ultimately defer to your expertise. Here's a look at some other potential negatives:

- Wildlife Impacts: Acknowledge that there will be some impacts on local wildlife, but be sure to provide the needed context. Yes, turning a stand of middle-aged trees into young forest may displace or harm some individual animals, but it will not harm the longterm health of the larger populations of woodland forest creatures. Despite increased human development, the Northeast is now far more heavily forested than it was 100 years ago. Bird survey data show that populations of more than half of woodland bird species have been climbing since 1966 in the Northeast, including the pine warbler, red-shouldered hawk, warbling vireo, pileated woodpecker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, and Cooper's hawk.⁷ And even black bear and moose, thought of as woodland creatures by many, need young forest for the enhanced food and cover it provides during critical times of the year.

Turning a stand of middle-aged trees into young forest may displace or harm some individual animals, but it will not harm the longterm health of the larger populations of woodland forest creatures.

Acknowledge the dramatic change in appearance, and then cite real examples of how such management techniques bring big benefits for wildlife.



Credit: James Oehler.

- **Changing Aesthetics:** It's important to prepare folks for the changed appearance of a newly managed site. The way the land looks right after a prescribed fire, a timber harvest, or shrub-cutting with a hydro-axe or brontosaurus machine can be very alarming. The public may see such changes as ugly and destructive. Acknowledge the

dramatic change in appearance, and then cite real examples of how such management techniques bring big benefits for wildlife. Sure, a clearcut can look raw and messy. But young trees and shrubs will grow back within a year or two to provide habitat for a more-diverse range of wildlife than previously inhabited the site – including wild creatures whose populations have been falling regionwide. Use photographs, testimonials, and site tours of successful habitat projects to build trust, reduce opposition to management, and head off controversy. Many agencies, nature preserves, and wildlife organizations put up interpretive signs explaining the reason for a given habitat project, often including photographs of what the habitat will look like in the future and the animals that will use that habitat.

- **Respect the public's emotional connection to the land and wildlife.** As natural resource professionals, we're trained to be objective, but the public's feelings toward wildlife and wild places are often based on strong emotions and long-held opinions. Even when you don't agree with those emotions and opinions, let people know that you can understand their perspective. Then, in an engaging

way, provide them with solid information to broaden that perspective. A good approach is to ask a group what their specific concerns are, and then give them the kind of information that addresses those concerns while stressing the overall conservation mission of helping *all* wildlife. Don't forget to show how much you too care about wildlife and the landscape.

- **Emphasize the diverse partners already working to create young forest:** state and federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations like the Aududon Society, Ruffed Grouse Society, and the Wildlife Management Institute, towns and counties, Native American tribes, the military, land trusts, private landowners, forest management and other private companies. Making more young forest is prominent in each of the 13 northeastern states' Wildlife Action Plans, the North American Landbird Conservation Plan,⁹ the New England Cottontail Recovery Plan,¹⁰ the Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan,¹⁹ the American Woodcock Conservation Plan,⁵ the Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan,⁶ the Spruce Grouse Continental Conservation Plan,²⁰ and the activities of the Natural Resources Conservation Service within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All of these partners, plans, and programs recognize that young forest wildlife are in trouble, and that more young forest needs to be created and maintained to meet scientifically developed wildlife conservation goals.

- **Remind people of our legal mandate:** state and federal laws, State Wildlife Action Plans, and endangered species recovery plans require that we keep

wildlife from becoming threatened or endangered and potentially going extinct. Wildlife Action Plans drive state-government-based nongame fish and wildlife management programs. Carrying out these federally mandated and approved plans makes it much less likely that different species will dwindle to the point where they may warrant listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. Wildlife management is both biologically and economically beneficial, which is why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports managing for young forest habitat.

- Note that many private landowners are also coming to realize that managing some of their land as young forest habitat can provide economic returns while delivering many benefits, including improved opportunities to view wildlife.²¹ More and more private conservation organizations are restoring young forest

to help a range of different wildlife while yielding benefits as various as carbon sequestration, clean air and water, hunting, wildlife watching, and other traditional wildlife uses.

Communication DON'Ts

- Don't use words and phrases that your audience will not relate to or might perceive as being negative. These may include biodiversity conservation, logging, timbering, or family forest owner. Instead, use the words that most folks use themselves, like woods, looking after the land, harvesting trees, and woodland owner.
- Don't use technical terms that won't be understood or, worse yet, will turn people off – words like early successional, silviculture, forestry, and sustainable land management. Avoid technical names of plants and animals; use common names instead.

Cite real-world examples, like the habitat projects described on www.youngforest.org, to show that positive change is within reach.



Yellow Warbler. Credit: Geoff Clarke.

Creating much-needed young forest habitat will not jeopardize the populations of woodland wildlife. In many cases it will provide them with important food and cover at critical times of the year. It will also help another suite of wild animals that depend on young forest habitat for their survival.

- Don't overstate your case. Young forest is important for meeting our regional and national wildlife conservation goals, but so, too, are older forested habitats. Populations of woodland wildlife were once in danger, although they've increased dramatically in recent decades as forests have replaced farm fields or recovered from widespread and excessive clearcutting. Remember that conservationists set up many of our public parks and forests – such as Adirondack State Park and the White Mountain National Forest – because they worried about losing our forests and wildlife to aggressive, unregulated, and unsustainable logging. Creating much-needed young forest habitat will not jeopardize the populations of woodland wildlife. In many cases it will provide them with important food and cover at critical times of the year. It will also help another suite of wild animals that depend on young forest habitat for their survival.

- Don't feel that you need to sway opponents the first time you talk with them. Changes in attitude will likely happen after your time in front of an audience is over. Don't feel the need to “win,” and don't try to beat a concept into a resistant group or individual audience member. Give people time to process your information, and be sure to follow up. Patience and persistence is the name of the game.

- Don't focus on the negative. Conservation is problem-solving; as with many other contemporary conservation topics, the reasons we must create young forest can seem both compelling and discouraging. Let's say you're talking to a local Audubon chapter for an hour. Don't spend all your time stressing how scarce the golden-winged warbler is becoming, or the fact that we just don't hear whip-poor-wills these days. Be positive and spend at least half of your



Young forest habitat. Credit: James Oehler.

time talking about what can be done to help these and other species through habitat management. Cite real-world examples, like the habitat projects described on www.youngforest.org, to show that positive change is within reach. Remember, the goal is to achieve informed consent for management activities – and not necessarily a thorough understanding of how bad things have gotten to warrant making thousands of acres of new young forest habitat.

- Don't assume that people's minds can't be changed. Public attitudes that favor mature, closed-canopy forest can

be broadened to include young forest. Cornell University research suggests that public apathy toward young forest comes more from a lack of information and understanding rather than a dislike for how young forest looks.²¹ The pressing need to help beleaguered wildlife may be the most effective concept for changing negative public attitudes toward young forest. Let folks know that such habitats are nature's nursery for an amazing diversity of wild creatures, providing abundant food and excellent cover – and in turn creating some of the best opportunities for people to experience wildlife in a natural setting.

Let folks know that such habitats are nature's nursery for an amazing diversity of wild creatures, providing abundant food and excellent cover – and in turn creating some of the best opportunities for people to experience wildlife in a natural setting.

Wildlife Recreation

Wildlife and wildlife-related recreation remain extremely important to many people in the Northeast, and that interest represents a useful tool for talking to the public about young forest habitat management. According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, more than 39 million people took part in wildlife-related activities in the northeastern states during 2011, the most recent year for which data were available.²² Some 7 million people went hunting or fishing, and 17.5 million people went out specifically to observe wildlife. These folks spent \$13 billion on hunting and fishing and another \$12 billion on watching wildlife. Let your audience know that having a diversity of wildlife is good for the economy and for their own enjoyment, in addition to being good for the animals themselves.



Credit: Mark Beauchesne.



Credit: Victor Young.

Talking to Landowners

Because the key messages for one type of landowner may not work for others, it's important for you to understand the kind of landowner to whom you're talking so that you can customize your messages and approach.



Credit: Malin Clyde.

Since 80 percent of the Northeast is privately owned, it's imperative that conservationists enlist private landowners to support and create young forest on their properties. This is a big challenge, because most landowners do not hold positive attitudes toward young forests and are not inclined to manage for them. ²¹

The Sustaining Family Forest Initiative (www.sustainingfamilyforests.org) is a partnership of universities, government

landowners. However, because the key messages for one type of landowner may not work for others, it's important for you to understand the kind of landowner to whom you're talking so that you can customize your messages and approach.

Woodland Retreat Owners

Woodland Retreat Owners own their land primarily for its beauty and recreational value. Aesthetics, biodiversity, privacy, hunting, and recreation are important to them. They like being in the woods with their friends and families, and many have invested in cabins, trails, and ponds to maximize the beauty and recreational value of their land. Using their land as an investment or to obtain income (such as from a timber harvest) are not important. These landowners see their woods as a special place to be preserved for future generations in the face of real and potential threats such as insect defoliation, damage from trespassing, and high property taxes.

Many Woodland Retreat Owners see their land as a sanctuary for animals and birds, and themselves as defenders of this sanctuary. They are therefore best targeted with messages explaining how creating young forest can make the woods healthier and more attractive to wildlife.

Find out what sorts of recreation and wildlife these landowners find interesting, then shape your message accordingly. If landowners enjoy bird watching, explain how young forests will increase their opportunities to attract a variety of new and colorful birds that they may never

agencies, industry, and conservation organizations. SFFI used data from the National Woodland Owners Survey ²⁴ to help sort the millions of woodland owners into four distinct types: Woodland Retreat Owners, Working-the-Land Owners, Supplemental Income Owners, and Uninvolved Owners. ²⁵ Each type of owner manages their land for different reasons. The "Communications Do's and Don't's" from the chapter "Communicating with the Public" work well as general guidelines on talking to

have seen or heard on their property before. If they hunt upland game birds or deer, dwell on the improved food and cover that young forest will provide, thereby improving hunting opportunities.

Messages that focus solely on financial gain may turn off Woodland Retreat Owners. However, they may respond favorably to an approach that blends some element of financial gain with an appeal to improving woodland health, maximizing recreational opportunities, or helping wildlife.

Of all the different kinds of landowners, Woodland Retreat Owners are likely to be most strongly inclined toward forest stewardship. Still, significant barriers work against persuading them to manage for young forest:

- They may think that the best thing they can do for their woods is to leave them alone. Many dislike the idea of “managing” the woods; they would rather let nature take its course. You need to explain how people today largely prevent nature from creating the disturbances needed to maintain young forest wildlife and how we can mimic natural disturbances through well-planned, carefully executed, ongoing forest management.
- Woodland Retreat Owners tend to be less confident in their ability to carry out land management activities at a reasonable cost and without damaging the land. Give them information on how to get funding and help in planning projects, plus connect them with professional contractors who do a good

Explain how people today largely prevent nature from creating the disturbances needed to maintain young forest wildlife and how we can mimic natural disturbances through well-planned, carefully executed, ongoing forest management.



Credit: James Oehler.

Because they value the recreational, aesthetic, and financial aspects of owning land, messages that highlight these benefits resonate particularly well with Working-the-Land Owners.

job of managing habitat. Show them before and after pictures of successful projects, or invite them to a habitat demonstration area (such as those described in the “Projects” section of www.youngforest.org). If possible, draw in their friends and neighbors to share their experiences about managing young forest habitat on their own land. While Woodland Retreat Owners may be open to receiving advice, they will likely feel that such advice should be based on their own priorities: They aim to stay in charge of their land.

Working-the-Land Owners

Compared to Woodland Retreat Owners, Working-the-Land Owners are much less emotional and more pragmatic. Typically they have a strong and multifaceted interest in their land. The financial and amenity benefits of owning and managing woodlands are equally valuable to these landowners, who seek to use land in ways that balance both.

Working-the-Land Owners commonly harvest trees that they consider mature to improve the quality of remaining trees, to salvage damaged trees, for personal use (such as firewood), because they need money, to improve wildlife habitat, or because timber harvesting is part of a management plan. They commonly seek out management advice from state forestry departments, other landowners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, loggers, and their state extension service.

Because they value the recreational, aesthetic, and financial aspects of owning land, messages that highlight these benefits resonate particularly

well with Working-the-Land Owners. Discover what their particular interests are and then customize your messages accordingly. If a landowner’s major interest is a longterm source of firewood, note that young forest management can provide that source. If they enjoy hunting upland game birds, explain how making young forest can boost ruffed grouse and woodcock numbers. If they like the idea of maximizing their timber income, look for opportunities to work with them to manage their woodlands using even-aged management techniques that will provide an ongoing source of income, while also creating valuable young forest habitat.

Working-the-Land Owners often value experience and conventional wisdom over professional expertise or technical knowledge. They are more likely to trust local sources of information, which they see as ideologically and financially unbiased. Getting friends and neighbors to share their experiences may help persuade such landowners to manage for young forest.

Working-the-Land Owners tend to believe that healthy woods are good for wildlife. The health of their trees and woods is very important to them – more so than improving recreation, maximizing profit from timber sales, or having beautiful woods. Talk to them about how young forests contribute to healthy woodlands, and how these habitats are in short supply yet are strongly needed to keep our wildlife common, abundant, and diverse.

Supplemental Income Owners

Unlike the two preceding types of landowners, Supplemental Income Owners primarily own their land for investment and income purposes. They are the most likely to harvest trees to bring in money. While most Supplemental Income Owners say they do not have a specific five-year plan for their woods, about 25 percent say they plan to harvest sawlogs, 20 percent plan to harvest firewood, and 14 percent plan to sell some or all of their land in the future.

Supplemental Income Owners may have longstanding ties to the land, but these are based mainly on its income potential and investment value. Suggest to this type of landowner even-aged forest management practices that yield immediate or longterm financial benefits. Messages should emphasize the landowners' right to profit from the land while maximizing its value for future generations. Appeals based on aesthetics, biodiversity, or stewardship are less likely to work with this group. Any suggestion of moral or legal obligations that limit the owners' right to use their land as they please can quickly backfire.

Because their land provides a source of income, these owners may be willing to invest in professional services and land-improvement activities and tend to be good candidates for government cost-share programs. In fact, they are more likely than any other type of landowner to have participated in a cost-share program. Approach these landowners with "win/win pitches" that combine some financial benefits with meeting stewardship objectives. For example, if a

Supplemental Income Landowner has a high-graded forest stand on their property, explain how cost-share programs may help with removing the remaining lower-quality trees at no cost, thereby improving the future health of the stand, assuring higher longterm economic gain while providing the young forest habitat so important to wildlife.

Uninvolved Owners

Uninvolved Owners are just that: uninvolved with the acres they own. As a group, they are neither financially motivated nor particularly interested in the recreational or aesthetic benefits of owning forestland. Most say they plan no or minimal management activity on their woodland over the next five years.



Magnolia warbler. Credit: Simon Pierre Barrette.

Given their low level of enthusiasm, lack of strong motives for owning woods, and few strong concerns about their land, Uninvolved Owners are not likely to become active in conservation or woodland management. We recommend placing priority on other audiences that will be more receptive to your

Supplemental Income Owners may have longstanding ties to the land, but these are based mainly on its income potential and investment value. Suggest to this type of landowner even-aged forest management practices that yield immediate or longterm financial benefits.

While most natural resource professionals view young forests as an integral part of a larger ecological system, few landowners see it that way.

messages. However, don't give up on these landowners altogether. Messages that highlight financial gain, recreational improvements, or other benefits may work with some Uninvolved Owners. Appeals that focus on moral obligations or altruism are likely not to work. Uninvolved Owners tend not to give a lot of thought to managing their woodlands or deriving any benefit from them. Therefore, they may be receptive to programs that yield benefit with little investment of time or attention.

Summing Up

Regardless of the type of landowner, research suggests they will likely have a limited understanding of what young forest is, what it looks like, and the fact that it is becoming increasingly scarce along with the wildlife that need such habitat.^{21, 25} While you may view young forests as an integral part of a larger ecological system, few landowners see it that way. When trying to persuade private landowners to create young

forest, natural resource professionals may advocate techniques such as clearcutting and patch cutting, whereas landowners may erroneously think of "thinning" as a viable way to make young forest. They are far more likely to visualize reverting farm fields as classic young forest habitat. Therefore, it's important to help landowners understand that young forest also includes densely regrowing young trees following a timber harvest, and that the stage during which this regrowth provides habitat for young forest wildlife lasts only 10 to 20 years.

Improving a landowner's understanding of young forests will likely be the biggest challenge you'll need to overcome. This communications handbook, coupled with the resources available on www.youngforest.org, will give you the tools you need to educate and inform private landowners about this important habitat – and perhaps move them to make young forest on the acres they own.



Credit: James Oehler.

Talking to Decision-Makers

(administrators with state and federal agencies, administrators and board members of nongovernmental organizations, municipal and county employees and planners, citizens on municipal and county boards, and legislators)

You can use all of the major points and communication strategies described earlier in this handbook when addressing decision-makers on the need to create young forest for our region's wildlife. However, there are some important differences to consider. These professionals, elected officials, and volunteer administrators are ultimately concerned with knowing why funds should be spent or policies supported. When you meet with decision-makers, keep the following in mind:

- Decision-makers serve the public, and they care deeply about what the public is interested in. Make sure you explain how creating and maintaining young forest will improve the lives of their constituents by enhancing recreational opportunities (such as birding, wildlife observing, and hunting) and delivering economic benefits (including income from the sale of forest products and potential employment in carrying out habitat-improvement work).
- Decision-makers represent one of the busiest audiences you will encounter, with plenty of demands on their time. You'll need to explain why the public cares about young forest and wildlife as briefly and succinctly as possible.
- Provide the essentials and stay on message. Your opportunity to communicate with folks in this category may be quite limited, so prepare carefully, marshal pertinent facts, and leave them

with a simple one-page information sheet, flier, or pamphlet. Thoughtfully repeating the essence of your message in several different ways will help get your points across. Your key points may include:

- **Economics:** Young forest habitat management can create valuable habitat while generating employment and money by enhancing wildlife-related recreation and yielding valuable forest products. Conserving species before they become endangered is a smart investment, because it reduces regulatory burdens and the expenses tied to trying to save creatures in imminent danger of going extinct.
- **Wildlife:** Restoring young forest habitat will greatly help 89 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need as well as many other wildlife. (We include a list of these species for each of the 13 northeastern states on page 32.)
- **Existing Plans:** Public support and funds created the state Wildlife Action Plans, which specify the need to manage for more young forest habitat to help wildlife. Remind decision-makers that these plans incorporate the best available scientific knowledge; that they represent a positive path forward; and that carrying them out injects significant federal funding into state and local economies (\$10.5 million in the Northeast in 2012).²⁶

Your opportunity to communicate with folks in this category may be quite limited, so prepare carefully, marshal pertinent facts, and leave them with a simple one-page information sheet, flier, or pamphlet. Thoughtfully repeating the essence of your message in several different ways will help get your points across.

Talking to the Media

The media provide a conduit of communication to all of the other audiences that need to support – or at least to understand and accept – the management actions conservationists must take to restore and maintain young forest habitat.

You can get the message out about young forest through the media: news, science, and environmental reporters working for newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. The media provide a conduit of communication to all of the other audiences that need to support – or at least to understand and accept – the management actions conservationists must take to restore and maintain young forest habitat. Reporting by the media can also have a tremendous influence on decision-makers.

The mass media focus on news, defined as newly received or noteworthy information, especially concerning recent important events. So what's news? Launching a new habitat-restoration project on a state wildlife management area, a federal wildlife refuge, a municipal property, or land owned by a Native American tribe, a land trust, or a prominent local business. Significant progress in such a project, as shown by surveys revealing that wildlife numbers have gone up. New research results explaining how young forest helps a popular species of wildlife, or important trends involving habitat change or wildlife populations in your local area, your state, or the Northeast as a whole.

Use the following guidelines to develop a good working relationship with reporters and editors and to persuade them to develop and produce positive feature stories and news segments on young forest topics.^{27, 28}

1. Give priority to news media relationships and developing media contacts.

News media operate on minute-by-minute deadlines, so it's important to quickly take advantage of any opportunities they may give you as a source in their stories. Most reporters have very little time to work on a given story and need an immediate response when they query an expert – if you miss a reporter's deadline, you miss the chance to share your perspective. Make every effort to provide accurate responses as quickly as possible. Never ask to review a story before it is printed or aired, but remain available to provide additional information or clarification. Don't overwhelm reporters; prepare and deliver three key messages about your "news."

2. Find the news element.

By commenting on or sharing news, you foster a relationship with people who work in the media. Every significant conservation project should include media outreach, which can range from an e-mail or a phone call to the local paper, to a press release that you produce in cooperation with a communications specialist in your or a partner's agency or organization. In written communications, include the following in the first 30 to 40 words: who, what, when, where, how, and why (not only why did something occur, but why people should care).

Reach out to reporters when . . .

- a project begins, takes a step forward, shows promising results, or has an

anniversary or occasions a public event (such as a seminar for landowners or foresters, or a dedication or other ceremony or celebration);

- a project relates in some way to the time of the year, a current news topic, or a holiday (for example, a story on creating young forest habitat for New England cottontails might attract media notice at Easter);

- there's an element of oddity or uniqueness (maybe the project site has prominent ties to local history, or special meaning for a local citizen who's creating or is in favor of creating habitat);

- results are surprising or unexpected, or meet expectations;

- results fit into a trend;
- positive impacts result for people or wildlife.

Remember to “pitch” the news element and message to a reporter while the issue or story is hot and relevant; sometimes this will be before the final result occurs. This will let the reporter follow progress on a management action at key stages along the way.

3. Find the right person to talk to. Some media outlets show reporters' e-mail addresses in their newspapers or online.

Determine which media outlet you should contact with your news. If a given habitat project is small, contact a local or

If there's a possibility for interest across your state, or if several similar projects across the state form a trend, query statewide media such as public radio or television.



Credit: Neil Gifford.



When you pitch a story to a reporter, keep your objective in mind and have your key messages or talking points at hand.



Canada Warbler.
Credit: Emmett Hume.

regional newspaper. If there's a possibility for interest across your state, or if several similar projects across the state form a trend, query statewide media such as public radio or television.

At larger papers, contact an outdoors or environmental reporter or columnist. Some others you may speak with include:

- managing editor, for daily news-oriented stories;
- city editor, for local news;
- state editor, for state news;
- weekend or style section editors, for recreation opportunities on habitat projects;
- editor or publisher, for lengthy letters or op-ed (opposite the editorial page) articles;
- assignment editor, to request that a reporter cover a story.

4. Tighten your message – and repeat it.

Use simple declarative sentences that are clear and concise. When you think you have identified your message or messages, consider how a reporter or editor might perceive them (will they “get” what you’re trying to express?). Rewrite your information to get rid of unnecessary words. When you pitch a story to a reporter, keep your objective in mind and have your key messages or talking points at hand.

5. Be prepared.

In working up your announcement or news pitch, write down the following:

- the issue (news element);
- background information;
- goals of your communication or outreach effort;
- targeted audiences or interested parties;
- messages;
- related materials and tools available to clarify your messages.

6. You can (almost) always say something or find someone who can.

It's fine to say that you don't know the answer to a question, but offer to help a reporter find the answer. Though you may not be able to discuss a specific project, you can give the reporter careful, accurate insights about the need for young forest management at a general level and then help connect the reporter

to a person who can speak specifically about the project in question. Refer reporters to www.youngforest.org for background information, but remember that a personal quote is always a vital part of any news story.

7. Keep the conversation at the right level.

When you work with the news media, keep two audiences in mind: the first is the editor or reporter, and the second is some segment of the public. Your goal is to spark the interest of editors or reporters so they will convey your story to the public. To sell a story, you must let both reporters and the public know why the story is important or relevant to them.

Reporters often have a certain issue that they're trying to cover and limited time to research it. Try to address their specific needs at a level appropriate for their story; if there's room to speak to the larger story or issue, do that after you've addressed their needs. When you speak with a reporter, try to imagine that you're talking with a friend or a relative who has a limited understanding of wildlife and science, and you have exactly three minutes to convey the most important information about the subject. Keep your words understandable and succinct, and don't be afraid to throw in interesting personal tidbits. If you send a press release, make sure it's easy to understand, and that means staying away from jargon and bureaucratic language.

8. Use audio, video, or pictures.

Provide access for photographers, videographers, and radio reporters, and you'll significantly increase the

marketability of your story. If you have them, good-quality photos of wildlife or attractive shots of habitat can help a reporter decide to run your story. Include a link to digital resources like your agency's website or www.youngforest.org.

9. Personalize the issue.

Writing and distributing a news release or advisory is just one part of media relations. By including personal encounters or insights, you begin to change a news release into a story. Reporters' decisions to include specific pieces of information in their stories will be influenced by their perception or assessment of you as a trusted source. Whether you are on the air, sitting in your office, or in the field showing off a habitat project, try to have a relaxed, sincere, and informative conversation with the reporter.

10. Handle controversy with care.

Mass media have the ability to portray young forest management as reasonable and responsible – or an environmental catastrophe. As a natural resource professional, you may need to deal with an audience that disagrees with your actions. When you face a controversial situation and the press is on hand, make every effort to calmly and logically explain the need for conservation or management actions before, during, and after the event. Try to communicate both what you are doing and why.

If possible, provide access for mass media to observe management activities as they're taking place (a controlled burn, for instance), and share visuals of what the desired resulting habitat will look like

When you speak with a reporter, try to imagine that you're talking with a friend or a relative who has a limited understanding of wildlife and science, and you have exactly three minutes to convey the most important information about the subject.



Social media let you reach diverse and wide-ranging audiences, and an engaging photo plus a caption can quickly reach hundreds and maybe even thousands of people.

along with solid information on which animals it will benefit. Follow up with reporters in a few months or a year to revisit a habitat project and see how it has turned out.

11. If you don't say it, they can't print it.

You must be accessible and forthcoming to communicate with reporters and the public. If a reporter's call is unexpected, it's all right to ask for their deadline and then return the call a short while later. However, do answer the phone or return a message immediately, letting the reporter know you need to gather your notes and will call back soon. Fail to do this, and you may lose the chance to get your message included in a story.

People are sometimes reluctant to speak with reporters because they're afraid of being misquoted. If you make a mistake, just stop and restate your message. Practicing what you intend to say and anticipating questions will help you avoid being misquoted.

You can re-emphasize a point during an interview to be sure the reporter gets what you want him or her to remember. Before the interview, select two or three highly important points (think: "If they know nothing else, they must know this") and be sure to make those points during the interview.

If a reporter asks what you think is an odd question, he or she may simply be encouraging you to talk. So talk. But rather than trying to answer an odd or off-topic question, take advantage of the opportunity to provide information on one of those important topics or

key points that you've already selected. However, don't be evasive about answering valid questions.

12. Grab the reins and tell the story yourself.

Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram, to name a few, provide an excellent avenue for getting out your message. Even if you don't have a social media account for your own agency, organization, or business, you likely have a conservation partner that does. Social media let you reach diverse and wide-ranging audiences, and an engaging photo plus a caption can quickly reach hundreds and maybe even thousands of people. These platforms can also be used to pitch story ideas to reporters, thank or commend landowners and other partners, tout successful projects, and tell a story in your own words.

To take advantage of these new and emerging media outlets, make sure you've got a camera or smartphone with you in the field, and consider what images and angles will interest a broad audience with a short attention span. Then, work with the managers of relevant social media accounts to get your content shared. Try searching the web for topics like "How to write a Tweet" and "How to use Facebook." There are even YouTube videos on these and related subjects.

What's on the Web

These days, more and more people are turning to the internet – also called the worldwide web – for information. You, too, can use the web to help persuade folks of the pressing need for bringing more young forest to the Northeast.

The first place to go is www.youngforest.org, one of three websites on young forest and young forest wildlife created and supported by the Wildlife Management Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science, education, and conservation. Closely linked to www.youngforest.org are www.timberdoodle.org, which focuses on the American woodcock, a popular upland gamebird that needs young forest habitat to survive, and www.NewEnglandCottontail.org, which covers the New England cottontail, another young forest creature whose population has fallen in recent decades to the point that it's a candidate for the federal Endangered Species List.

These websites are full of information about young forest and the animals that need it – as well as descriptions of habitat demonstration areas where people can go and see young forest and learn how to make it. The demonstration areas have been created by different conservation partners, something that shows the breadth of the effort to restore this valuable habitat: state and federal agencies, farmers and forest landowners, towns and municipalities, nongovernmental organizations, land trusts, the U.S. Army, private companies, and many more.

Browse through the websites to pick up ideas on how to tailor your message to different audiences: conservation-minded landowners, consulting foresters, local news reporters, hunters, and managers of public lands, such as state parks or state forests, whose focus may not be wildlife. In particular, check out the “Resources” section of www.youngforest.org, where communicators will make available a wide range of useful documents and reports. Run through the “Frequently Asked Questions,” or FAQs, which supply answers to queries that you're most likely to get from the public.

Don't hesitate to copy text directly from the website, for use in crafting a speech, a news release, a brochure. The text was written to be easily understood by general readers, including those who don't have science or conservation backgrounds.



The first place to go is www.youngforest.org, one of three websites on young forest and young forest wildlife created and supported by the Wildlife Management Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science, education, and conservation.

Another valuable website to check out is www.gwwa.org, the website for the Golden-Winged Warbler Conservation Initiative. Here you will learn more about the plight of this colorful songbird, what conservationists are doing to help restore it, and resources you can use when talking to different audiences.

And be sure to include a link to www.youngforest.org whenever you communicate in any way with folks about making young forest. The more people who visit the website, the easier it will be for conservation professionals to spread the word about this fascinating, wildlife-friendly habitat.

On www.youngforest.org, check the dropdowns under the menu item “How to Make It.” The section “Making Habitat Wisely” explains how to identify areas where it makes sense to help young forest wildlife by managing their habitat, plus the importance of knowing where not to create young forest – places like steep slopes (erosion can result), woods around vernal pools (we don’t want these important pocket wetlands to dry up), and stands of trees that should be left alone (either to produce valuable sawlogs in the future or simply to keep a large expanse of woodland intact in an area that may already have enough young forest).

Another valuable website to check out is www.gwwa.org, the website for the Golden-Winged Warbler Conservation Initiative. Here you will learn more about the plight of this colorful songbird, what conservationists are doing to help restore it, and resources you can use when talking to different audiences.

An important message to place before the public – and one that will give credence to your status as a dedicated conservation professional whose message is reliable and accurate – is that we don’t want to make young forest everywhere. The fact is, we need to keep *all* wildlife in mind when we manage habitat.

And that’s what it’s about: making the Northeast a region whose diverse wildlife can continue to provide benefits to humans and where all wild creatures can find places to live and thrive. Use this communications handbook to help people understand, consent to, and join in on this important task.



Credit: James Oehler.

Endnotes

¹ Trani, Margaret K.; Brooks, Robert T.; Schmidt, Thomas L.; Rudis, Victor A.; Gabbard, Christine M. 2001. Patterns and trends of early successional forests in the Eastern United States. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. 29 (2): 413-424. <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/2901>

² US Forest Service. Undated. Forest Inventory and Analysis online database. National Office U.S. Forest Service, Arlington, VA. <http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/tools-data/>

³ USGS. Undated. SWAP Species Conservation Status Analysis Tool. Accessed September 22, 2012. <http://swap-analysis.appspot.com/index.jsp>

⁴ Gilbert, M. 2012. Under Cover: Wildlife of Shrublands and Young Forest. Wildlife Management Institute. Cabot VT. 87 pages. http://www.youngforest.org/sites/default/files/Under_Cover-010412_FINAL.pdf

⁵ Kelley, J., S. Williamson, and T.R. Cooper (eds). 2008. American Woodcock conservation plan: a summary of recommendations for woodcock conservation in North America. Woodcock Task Force, Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington DC. 168 pages. http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CurrentBirdIssues/Management/FocalSpecies/Plans/american_woodcock_conservation_plan.pdf

⁶ Dessecker, D.R., G.W. Norman, and S.J. Williamson. 2006. Ruffed grouse conservation plan. Resident Game Bird Working Group, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington DC. 95 pages. http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/UserFiles/File/RG_ConservationPlan.pdf

⁷ Dettmers, R. 2006. A blueprint for the design and delivery of bird conservation in the Atlantic northern forest. Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley,

MA. 346 pages. http://acjv.org/documents/BCR_14_%20Blueprint.pdf

⁸ Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, J. E. Fallon, K. L. Pardieck, D. J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W. A. Link. 2011. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 2010. Version 12.07.2011 USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD. Most Recent Update: 16 April 2012.

⁹ Rich, T. D., C. J. Beardmore, H. Berlanga, P. J. Blancher, M. S. W. Bradstreet, G. S. Butcher, D. W. Demarest, E. H. Dunn, W. C. Hunter, E. E. Iñigo-Elias, J. A. Kennedy, A. M. Martell, A. O. Panjabi, D. N. Pashley, K. V. Rosenberg, C. M. Rustay, J. S. Wendt, T. C. Will. 2004. Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Ithaca, NY.

¹⁰ Fuller, S. and A. Turr. 2012. Conservation strategy for the New England cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*).

¹¹ Schlossberg, S. and D. I. King. 2008. Are shrubland birds edge specialists? *Ecological Applications*. 18(6): 1325-1330.

¹² E. G. Endrulat, S.R. McWilliams, and B.C. Tefft. 2005. Habitat Selection and Home Range Size of Ruffed Grouse in Rhode Island. *Northeast Naturalist* 12(4):411-424.

¹³ Litvaitis, J. A. (2001). Importance of early successional habitats to mammals in eastern forests. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 29(2), 466-473.

¹⁴ Case, D.J., Seng, P.T., and Chritoffel, R. 2009. Investigating communications strategies to support implementation of the American Woodcock Conservation Plan. Case Study 2009-04. D.J. Case and Associates. 25pp. http://timberdoodle.org/sites/default/files/Woodcock_Communications_Strategy_2-21-10.pdf

¹⁵ Sustaining Family Forests Initiative. 2009. Tools for engaging landowners effectively. Sustaining Family Forests Initiative. Accessed October 1, 2012. <http://www.engaginglandowners.org>

¹⁶ Anderson, M.G. and A. Olivero Sheldon. 2011. Conservation Status of Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Habitats in the Northeast Landscape: Implementation of the Northeast Monitoring Framework. The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Conservation Science. 289 pp.

¹⁷ Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. 2012. Landscape designations for DCR parks and forests: selection criteria and management guidelines. Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Boston, MA. 163pp. http://www.mass.gov/dcr/ld/management_guidelines.pdf

¹⁸ New York's Forest Preserve – Article XIV of the New York State Constitution. 1894. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/55849.html>

¹⁹ US Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. Final Recovery Plan for the Karner Blue Butterfly (*Lycaides Melissa Melissa*). USFWS Fort Snelling, MN: 273pp. <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/insects/kbb/index.html>

²⁰ Williamson, S.J., D. Keppie, R. Davison, D. Budeau, S. Carrière, D. Rabe and M. Schroeder. 2008. Spruce Grouse Continental Conservation Plan. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Washington, DC. 60 pages. <http://www.foolhen.org>

²¹ Dayer, A.A., Broussard Allred, S., Stedman, R.C., Decker, D., Enck, J. and Kurth, M. (2011). New York's Southern tier landowners' management for early successional forest habitat: attitudes, barriers, and motivations. HDRU Publ. 11-9. Department of Natural Resources, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. 102 pp

²² U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. 2011 National survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation: state overview. 28pp. <http://digitalmedia.fws.gov/cdm/ref/collection/document/id/858>

²³ Forest Inventory and Analysis Program. 2012. Forest inventory data online. US Forest Service, Arlington, VA. <http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/tools-data>

²⁴ U.S. Forest Service. Undated. National Woodland Owner Survey. Forest Inventory and Analysis National Program. U.S. Forest Service, Arlington, VA. <http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/nwos>

²⁵ Sustaining Family Forests Initiative. 2009. Tools for engaging landowners effectively. <http://www.engaginglandowners.org>

²⁶ G. Siekaniec. 2012. 2012 State wildlife grant apportionment letter to state wildlife agencies and territories. US Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC. <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/SWG/SWG2012Apportionment.pdf>

²⁷ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines to Working with News Media

²⁸ C. Jaffe Jones and Jaffe Jones, E. 2007. A hands-on workshop. Winning News Media, Inc. <http://www.winning-newsmedia.com>

Appendix A.

Young forest wildlife in the Northeast designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Visit www.youngforest.org for more information on many of these species.

Species	FED STATUS	CT	DE	MA	MD	ME	NH	NJ	NY	PA	RI	VA	VT	WV
American Burying Beetle				X		X			X			X		
Buckmoth		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	
Barrens Dagger Moth		X	X	X	X				X			X		
Barrens Metarranthis moth		X		X		X			X					
Barrens Tiger Beetle				X	X				X			X		
Barrens xylotype							X				X			
Broad-lined catopyrra							X		X					
Cora moth							X		X					
Frosted Elfin		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Henry's Elfin		X	X						X	X	X			
Imperial Moth				X									X	
Karner blue butterfly	Endangered					X	X		X					
Mottled Duskywing		X	X		X				X	X		X		X
Noctuid moth (Chytonix sesilis)								X	X	X				
Noctuid Moth (Chaetagnaea cerata)			X	X		X			X	X				X
Persius duskywing		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Phyllira tiger moth		X	X	X			X		X	X				
Pine Barrens Tiger Beetle		X		X	X				X				X	
Pine barrens itame		X		X		X	X	X	X					
Pine barrens zanclognatha moth		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	

Pine piñon moth		X		X		X	X		X		X			
Regal Fritillary		X	X		X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Sleepy Duskywing		X				X	X		X		X			
Spiny Oakworm				X										
Tawny Crescent					X	X			X					
Alder Flycatcher		X			X					X				
American Woodcock		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bay-breasted Warbler		X				X	X		X				X	
Bicknell's Thrush			X		X	X	X		X			X	X	
Black-backed Woodpecker													X	
Black-billed Cuckoo		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Blue-winged Warbler		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Brown Thrasher		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Canada Warbler		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Chestnut-sided Warbler		X	X		X	X					X		X	
Common nighthawk		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Eastern Kingbird		X	X			X		X			X	X		
Eastern Towhee		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	
Field Sparrow		X	X	X	X	X		X				X	X	
Golden-winged Warbler		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Gray Catbird		X						X				X		
Hooded Warbler		X	X		X			X						
Indigo Bunting		X						X						
Kentucky Warbler			X		X			X	X	X		X		X
Kirtland's Warbler	Endangered											X		

Magnolia Warbler		X			X									
Mourning Warbler				X	X									
Nashville Warbler					X						X			X
Northern Bobwhite		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X
Olive-sided Flycatcher		X			X	X		X	X	X			X	X
Orchard Oriole		X				X								
Prairie Warbler		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ruffed Grouse		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	
Rusty Blackbird						X	X		X			X	X	
Spruce Grouse						X	X		X				X	
Tennessee Warbler						X			X					
Veery		X	X		X	X	X	X					X	
Whip-poor-will		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
White-eyed Vireo		X												
White-throated Sparrow				X										
Willow Flycatcher		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Candidate	X				X		X			X	X		
Yellow-breasted Chat		X	X					X	X	X	X	X		
Yellow Warbler						X					X	X		
Appalachian Cottontail					X					X		X		X
Bobcat		X		X	X		X	X			X		X	
Canada Lynx	Threatened					X	X		X				X	
Eastern Spotted Skunk					X					X		X		X
Long-tailed Weasel		X											X	
New England Cottontail	Candidate	X		X	X	X	X		X		X		X	

Pygmy Shrew													X	
Short-tailed Weasel		X												
Snowshoe Hare					X						X	X		
Southern Red-backed Vole		X												
Woodland Jumping Mouse		X											X	
Brown Snake													X	
Eastern Box Turtle		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Eastern Massasuaga	Candidate								X	X				
Eastern hognose snake		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
Eastern Ribbon Snake			X				X		X	X		X		
Eastern Spadefoot		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X
Eastern Wormsnake				X					X					
Fowler's toad		X					X	X	X	X	X		X	
Five-lined Skink		X							X				X	
North American Racer		X		X		X	X		X				X	
North American Rat Snake				X					X		X		X	
Rough Green Snake			X							X				X
Smooth Green Snake		X					X		X	X		X	X	
Spotted Turtle		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Timber Rattlesnake		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
TOTALS	6	58	34	39	43	42	34	35	56	36	35	36	41	21



Credit: James Oehler.

