

Q: Why can't we just let nature take its course to enhance wildlife?

A: As long as humans make an effort to suppress natural disturbances such as fire, floods, disease and pest outbreaks, we are no longer dealing with a natural forest system. These disturbances are needed to create grasslands, shrublands and young forest habitats across the landscape. Many wildlife "species of greatest conservation need" rely on these disappearing habitats. The number of wildlife species present in a given area most always mirrors plant biodiversity, both species and structure diversity. In absence of natural disturbances, active management must be substituted to maintain the region's unique biodiversity.

Q: Does clear-cutting destroy the environment?

A: Although feared and often misunderstood, clear-cutting is a legitimate silvicultural tool for hardwood forests. It is an efficient way to create even-aged forest regeneration and the most practical way to generate early successional forest habitat in the absence of natural disturbances. Many wildlife species depend on these young forest habitats and others need a variety of young, intermediate and mature forests to meet their requirements. Be sure to preserve wildlife trees such as snag trees and maintain a vegetative buffer in surrounding riparian zones.



Bicknell's Thrush

Many Sources of Assistance are Available.
For specific information and advice regarding the CWCS, contact your regional NYS DEC wildlife biologist

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For a free on-site visit from a MFO volunteer, visit www.cornellmfo.info or call your Cornell Cooperative Extension Office.



For a wide variety of forestry and wildlife information visit www.ForestConnect.info.

For woodlot owners, please consider joining the New York Forest Owners Association at <http://www.nyfoa.org>.



The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) was completed by the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources (DFWMR) of NYSDEC in September of 2005 to address the wildlife species in greatest need of conservation in the state. The CWCS utilizes the best available data on the status of fish and wildlife species to define a vision and establish a strategy for state wildlife conservation and funding. The CWCS is a collaborative effort among agencies, organizations and individuals with an interest in New York's wildlife.
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30483.html>



Lake Champlain Watershed Region*

Over 75% of the Lake Champlain watershed region is covered in forest of which a significant amount is privately owned. Consequently, the health and prosperity of the watershed's wildlife populations depend on how well these owners protect and enhance the habitat on which the hundreds of species of insects, amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds and mammals depend. The good news is that most forest wildlife species are thriving, but unfortunately many are not. These species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) have been identified in the NY Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). 160 of these species call the Lake Champlain basin home.

A major goal of the CWCS is to inform forest owners of the need for management practices that will enhance forest biodiversity and thereby keep these SGCN from becoming rare or endangered. **So much of the critical habitats for these species exists on private lands that landowner cooperation will be the ultimate deciding factor on whether species declines can be halted.** The plan further lists the threats to these species and management strategies that will improve their habitat. Fortunately, for forest owners and wildlife alike, many species will benefit from sustainable forest practices, including sawtimber production, when implemented in accordance with NYS best management practices (BMPs).

***Counties:** Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Warren and Washington

New York's forests are now predominantly even-aged northern hardwoods.

Public reluctance to practice forestry, coupled with the absence of natural disturbances, may result in a forested landscape with relatively little structural and vegetative species diversity. It is important that forest owners and managers consider the wildlife benefits that both early and late successional forest management and restoration provides. These habitat attributes include the development of coarse woody debris, standing dead wood, structural variability, and multiple successional stages across the forested landscape. Contact a forester to develop a plan that meets your ownership objectives and incorporates habitat for SGCN.

Threats to the SGCN in the watershed:

- habitat loss and fragmentation
- degraded water quality
- active alteration/suppression of natural processes (e.g., fire)
- loss of young forest
- climate change
- inappropriate forestry/agriculture practices
- human-wildlife interactions (collection, poaching, recreation, vehicular collisions, public misconception of predators)

- Due to its relatively low population, the Lake Champlain Basin is ecologically healthy with a diverse number of habitats.
- Almost half the total bird species of greatest conservation need call the basin their home.
- Of the 106 SGCN in the basin, 37% are declining, 75% of which are birds.
- The mineral rich bedrock and soils of this region support communities high in plant and animal diversity.

Management Suggestions for Woodland and Forested Habitats:

Northern Hardwoods

- Clear-cutting creates dense shrub, herbaceous ground cover layers, soft mast, slash and low exposed perches that support more wildlife than untreated sawtimber stands. Leave some wildlife trees (high exposed perches, cavity trees, coniferous overstory inclusion, snag trees).
- A shelterwood system leads to a partial overstory, partial early successional forest and promotes regeneration.
- Both clear-cutting and shelterwood techniques lead to an increase in raptor hunting areas.
- Silvicultural selection and thinning techniques have little impact on wildlife if done correctly.

Swamp Hardwoods

- Home to salamanders, frogs, turtles and snakes.
- Swamp hardwoods are usually of low economic value so wildlife management is often the primary reason for timber harvest.
- Clear-cutting with reserved patches and wildlife, den, nest and cavity trees is a viable and effective silvicultural technique.

Spruce-Fir

- High biodiversity exists during early successional stages due to the herbaceous shrub layer.
- Lowest biodiversity occurs during the pole timber stage because the early shrub layer is shaded out
- Highest biodiversity exists in mature and over-mature stands because of the increase in tree bole users.
- The shelterwood system is the most effective method at regeneration.

- Clear-cutting results in conversion to hardwood forests, in the absence of herbicide use and planting.

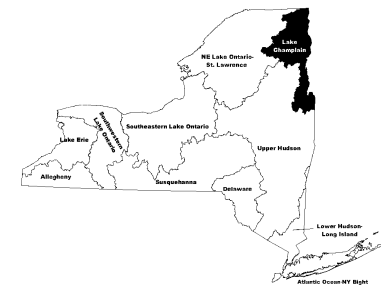
Eastern Hemlock

- Occurs with a broad array of associate tree species and provides conifer component.
- Valuable for den and cavity using wildlife.
- The shelterwood method is the most effective for regeneration.

Oak-Pine (including Pine Barrens)

- The number of wildlife species is high because species associated with both coniferous and deciduous forest types are brought together.
- Species diversity follows the same pattern as spruce-fir forests (high during regeneration, low during pole stage, high in mature forest).
- High trees provide perching/nesting sites for hawks, great blue herons, osprey and eagles.
- Prescribed fire may be needed for forest types such as pitch pine-scrub oak barrens.

Lake Champlain Watershed Region



Ecoregions:

- St. Lawrence-Champlain Valley
- Lower New England-Northern Piedmont
- Northern Appalachian-Boreal Forest