




Woodland Stewardship Online

11: Wildlife and Forest Management – Activity


How this helps you:

You will be able to identify wildlife species of interest on your land, evaluate habitat for those species, and understand basic principles of managing problem wildlife as well as threatened and endangered species. It offers excellent links to many more resources to deal with nearly any wildlife question.

Step 1: Identify and prioritize wildlife species of interest.


- **Step 1A:** Read the first two introductory pages of this chapter and the section on Timber Harvests and Wildlife ( PDF, pages 127 – 130). However, please remember that wildlife management draws on the concepts and practices contained in many relevant chapters of this book.
- **Step 1B:** Make a list of wildlife species or groups of species that you want to see on your property. To that end, keep a journal of your wildlife encounters as you are out and about on your land. Additionally, trail cameras have become a popular and helpful tool to document wildlife.
- **Step 1C:** Now prioritize your species list. Your future management decisions may benefit some species, but adversely affect others so knowing your priorities will help you select appropriate management strategies. Your wildlife management objective(s) are a key element to developing a comprehensive plan, so please reference your property goals ( PDF, page 3, Identify Your Goals) and stand objectives ( PDF, page 6, Develop Stand Objectives and Management Alternatives).

Step 2: Evaluate habitat for your wildlife species of interest.

- **Step 2A:** Read through the sections on: Early Successional (Young) Forests and Associated Wildlife and Late Successional (Mature) Forests and Associated Wildlife ( PDF, pages 130 – 134).
- **Step 2B:** Make notes on the habitat requirements of species that you want to see or manage on your property, especially key species like ruffed grouse, turkeys, and deer or rare, threatened, or endangered species. Conservation organizations like the Ruffed Grouse Society or National Wild Turkey Federation are helpful and local resources (see References section).
- **Step 2C:** Walk through your woodland and locate concentrations of food, water, shelter and space that are required by the wildlife you want to see. Mark these locations on a map of your property.


- **Step 2D:** If you are not able to recognize the habitat required by species of interest, go the Internet or other reference materials to learn more about their specific habitat requirements. Seek out a professional biologist, local naturalist, or neighbor or friend experienced and trained as a Master Naturalist or Coverts cooperator.
- **Step 2E:** Determine which portions of the habitat needed by your preferred species is limiting the population of that species. Again, a natural resources professional can be very helpful for this evaluation if necessary.
- **Step 2F:** It would be desirable to partner with your neighbors to coordinate management activities across property boundaries, especially for species like deer with large home ranges. You may find you share common interests with your neighbors and their property may provide habitat elements that you can not.
- **Step 2G:** If your evaluations show that critical habitat is missing in the vicinity, you need to consider how management of your woodlands could provide that missing habitat. Possible management activities may include, but are not limited to:
 - Harvest timber
 - Conduct timber stand improvement. For wildlife this may mean:
 - Thin a stand to encourage more understory vegetation
 - Release the crowns of mast-producing trees
 - Create dead standing trees
 - Create cavities in trees
 - Plant trees and/or shrubs for food or winter cover
 - Plant food plots
 - Install feeding stations to make wildlife observation easier (feeding deer and other mammals is ill-advised, and in some cases, illegal)
 - Install nest boxes or nest platforms
 - Install raptor perches
 - Build brush piles
 - Create a snake or bat hibernaculum
 - Create a water source (permits may be necessary)

Step 3: Manage problem wildlife.

- **Step 3A:** Read the section on Wildlife Challenges ( PDF, pages 134 – 137).
- **Step 3B:** Wildlife species are capable of causing agricultural crop damage; loss of livestock, birds, or other domestic animals; or difficulty regenerating new trees typically due to heavy deer browsing, among other economic and health-related problems.
- **Step 3C:** When wildlife damage occurs, you may need to do a little wildlife detective work to examine tooth marks, tracks, hairs, droppings, and other signs to determine the culprit. Many good field guides can help you interpret signs. (See the Links & Resources section.)
- **Step 3D:** Go to other references to learn about measures to reduce animal damage. See the Links & Resources section.

- **Step 3E:** If you think a high deer population may be suppressing plant regeneration, build a deer enclosure (fenced area that deer cannot enter) to monitor the impact of deer on vegetation, including both trees and understory plants. Enclosures can be as small as ten feet square, five feet tall, and made of well supported plastic or wire mesh, or as large as resources allow.

Step 4: Manage endangered and threatened species.

- **Step 4A:** Read the section on Endangered and Threatened Species Management ( PDF, pages 137 – 138)
- **Step 4B:** Ask a natural resource professional to check your state's endangered and threatened species inventory records to learn whether such a plant or animal might be present on your land or nearby. Public agencies sometimes prevent the public from seeing such records in order to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats, but they usually make such information available to landowners.
- **Step 4C:** If your land does provide habitat for an endangered or threatened species, you can take pride in knowing that your land may be the only property in the area where the species is found.
- **Step 4D:** Learn more about the habitat requirements of endangered or threatened species found on or near your land.
- **Step 4E:** Conduct future management of your land so as to protect the endangered or threatened species and its habitat.