

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

There are few recommended activities for wildlife management. The primary goal is to maintain current forest cover types such as oak, aspen and pine; to protect open and forested wetlands; to allow 2/3 of the forests to mature into an old growth state and to maintain an area of mixed younger growth forests. Leaving dead standing trees will benefit cavity nesting birds and animals. Having a "Friends of the Park" citizens group build, erect and maintain nesting boxes would improve wildlife habitat, while enabling residents to become involved in the maintenance and protection of the parklands.

Aspen Forests

It is important to maintain an aspen component on the property. This would be beneficial to wildlife. Furthermore, the diverse cover types offer changing vistas and improved opportunities for viewing wildlife.

Many woodland creatures use the aspen forest for nesting and feeding. Species such as the least flycatcher, red-eyed Vireo, rose-breasted grosbeak, black-billed cuckoo and American redstart nest in the tree canopy. Ground nesting species such as the ruffed grouse, veery, snowshoe hare, and white tailed deer use aspen forest types. A few species of wildlife that nest under ground or in debris include the eastern chipmunk, long-tailed weasel, marbled salamander, ringneck snake, milk snake and smooth green snake. Birds and mammals nest in cavities of trees. Species found in aspen stands may include black-capped chickadee, yellow-bellied sapsucker and northern flying squirrel. Natural nesting cavities can be supplemented by creating den trees and placing nesting boxes on poles or trees.

Along with a diversity of cover types, certain wildlife prefer a diversity of age classes, such sapling, poletimber and mature sawtimber of a particular forest type. Ruffed grouse need aspen stands of different age classes for mating cover, brooding cover and food sources. Due to the small acreage, staggered block harvesting is not feasible on this property. All of the aspen will be harvested at one time. The harvest areas should have an irregular shape. A meandering harvest line results in a greater linear distance of edge than a straight line. This edge or transition zone between mature and immature forest stands creates very desirable wildlife habitat.

To benefit ruffed grouse, two logs a minimum of twelve inches in diameter and eight feet in length, should be left per acre in the harvest areas. These "drumming logs" are used by male ruffed grouse.

- After the timber harvest, create around forty "drumming log" for ruffed grouse.
- Create ten brush piles, scattered throughout the harvested areas.

Pine Forests

Conifers provide important winter (thermal) cover for wildlife, particularly, when located next to winter food sources. Squirrels, black-backed woodpeckers, fox, and numerous species of song birds utilize pine forests for cover and food sources. The gray jay, pine grosbeak, evening grosbeak, red crossbill, purple finch, boreal chickadee, and pine siskin frequent upland conifer stands during the winter months. Many species of wildlife also use the upland conifer forest for nesting and feeding. The black-backed woodpecker nest in hollowed out tree trunks. The long-eared owl, solitary vireo, red crossbill, black-throated green warbler and evening grosbeak nest in the canopy, while the porcupine, long-tailed shrew, deer mouse, woodland jumping mouse and lynx nest beneath the ground or debris. This cover type also offers opportunities for viewing migratory birds in the spring and fall. These species include the golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, blackburnian warbler, magnolia warbler, bay-breasted warbler, Canada warbler, hermit thrush and winter wren.

Oak Forests

This mixed hardwoods forest provides food in the form of acorns and buds along with limited browse. Cover is provided by smaller white pine seedlings and saplings and snags or dead standing trees. Whip-poor-will, , gray jay, red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager, downy wood pecker, pileated woodpecker, blue jay, white-breasted nuthatch are a few birds that inhabit oak forests. Wild turkeys, gray squirrels, fox squirrels, black bear and white-tailed deer are typical game species found in the northern pin oak forests.

Open Bogs

These naturally occurring openings provide needed habitat components for certain wildlife species. The red-shouldered hawk and the great gray, northern saw-whet, snowy, and short-eared owls use these openings for hunting prey. Ground nesting species such as the short-eared owl, common snipe and ring-necked duck use this area. The northern waterthrush, arctic shrew, meadow vole, and southern bog lemming nest beneath the ground or debris. This cover type also offers opportunities for viewing migratory birds in the spring and fall. These species include the olive-sided flycatcher, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, Tennessee warbler, winter wren, palm warbler, Connecticut warbler, Lincoln's sparrow and white-tailed sparrow.

Marshes and Open Water

Marshes have an overall positive benefit for many species of wildlife, crustaceans, insects, amphibians, and reptiles. The great blue heron and green backed heron stand like statues in the shallow water along the pond edges waiting for food swim within reach of their long beaks. Raccoons, deer, black ducks, mallards, water shrew and mink

all come to the pond to feed. These animals along with many other species drink the water. The northern cricket frog, spring peeper, bullfrog & leopard frog, water snake, snapping turtle, painted turtle, mudpuppy, central newt, red-spotted newt, and greater siren are examples of reptiles and amphibians that use marshes.

Snags or dead standing trees

Snags or dead standing trees provide cavity nesting sites, perches and food (insects) for wildlife. Pileated woodpeckers chop huge rectangular holes in the trunks; these holes



are further excavated by other wildlife species and used for nesting cavities. Two to four snags should be left per acre. Since these trees are dead they do not compete with the healthy, growing trees in the forest. If none exist, snags can be created by girdling or removing two 4" wide strips of bark around the trunk of the tree. A chainsaw works best, but care should be used when operating such power equipment. To assure all of the bark is removed, cut one inch deep into the wood. This will cause the tree to die but remain standing. Both soft and hard snags should be present in the forest. Soft snags are created from aspen, basswood and conifer trees, while hard snags would be maple, beech and ash. It will not be necessary to create snags as there will be an adequate supply for the declining aspen and birch trees.

Leave dead standing trees for cavity nesting birds and mammals. Windfalls should be left for wildlife cover and browse. The small branches in the tops fall off and the tree trunks will come in contact with the ground, starting the long process of decomposition. As logs rot, insects, salamanders and fungi inhabit the logs, which in turn, provide food for other woodland creatures. Eventually, the woody materials are returned as decomposed organic matter to the forest for use by woodland plants. Tree trunks, a minimum of twelve inches in diameter, eight feet in length and lying on the ground, can benefit ruffed grouse. These "drumming logs" are used as perches by male ruffed grouse during their mating display rituals.

Building Brush Piles for Wildlife

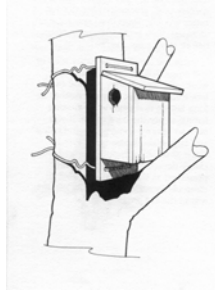
Cover for many species of wildlife can easily be created by constructing brush piles. Brush piles are best located next to wooded edges and food sources. Brush piles can be constructed from the logging debris. The size of the materials should be coarse next to the ground and get finer toward the top of the pile.



First, loosely pile four layers of 8"+ diameter poles in criss-crossing layers. Next, pile coarse branches, topping the pile with fine boughs. Piles should be 5 to 6 feet tall and 8 feet in diameter. The pile can be enhanced by placing 6" - 8" diameter clay tiles or wooden boxes under the base of the pile. Each year more branches and bows can be added to the pile.

Nesting Boxes for Wildlife

Sometimes, it may be necessary to emulate snags or den trees by placing nesting boxes around the forested areas. The red-headed woodpecker boxes should be placed along mature forest edges adjacent to old fields. Within the mature forest, put up nesting boxes for the following wildlife: downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, tifted titmouse, nuthatches, chickadee, gray squirrel, northern flying squirrel and barred owl. Along the edges of forests, place nesting boxes for the northern flicker, great crested flycatcher, and screech owl. It is important to note, with the placement of any artificial nesting box comes the long term commitment to maintain the box. For example, some of the boxes need to be emptied each year.



Erect 20 nesting boxes on small pole sized trees.