

6.13 WILDLIFE SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED

BACKGROUND

Species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) are those wildlife species whose populations are declining or naturally rare and whose continued existence requires some action.

For many species, the reduced availability of habitat contributes to their decline. Especially sensitive to habitat change are those with needs that can be met only by specific habitat characteristics such as a particular plant community, a particular hydrologic or temperature regime, or a particular size of habitat patch. Forest management activities can enhance, degrade or maintain the habitat of certain species.

Some of the SGCN are listed as threatened or endangered under the N.H. Endangered Species Conservation Act (RSA 212-A) and have some regulatory protection. Others are listed in the *New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan*, with recommendations for conservation actions that can help prevent them from declining and being listed under the Act. Modification in routine silvicultural operations may benefit these species. These decisions are best made on a site-specific basis.

OBJECTIVE

To sustain wildlife species of greatest conservation need in habitats where they occur and restore habitats that enable them to recover their populations.

CONSIDERATIONS

- N.H. Fish and Game (NHF&G) has legal authority regarding all wildlife—game, nongame and endangered or threatened species. NHF&G maintains the list of New Hampshire’s endangered and threatened wildlife. The list identifies the most imperiled wildlife in the state. NHF&G uses it to determine protection and management actions necessary to ensure the survival of the state’s endangered and threatened wildlife. The list is available through the NHF&G and is included in the Appendix (which also shows what other chapters in this manual address the needs of SGCN).
 - Endangered wildlife are those native species in danger of becoming extinct in New Hampshire because of loss or change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition, disease, disturbance, or contamination by pollutants.
 - Threatened wildlife are those native species likely to become endangered in the near future if conditions surrounding them begin or continue to decline.
- Actions that result in a “take” of a documented state threatened or endangered species (listed in FIS 1000 per RSA 212-A) are prohibited. It’s important to understand the needs of those species and incorporate them into land-management plans and activities.
- The specialized habitat needs of rare wildlife make it difficult to identify general guidelines and recommended practices. Guidelines need to be species-specific and applied where the species is known or likely to occur. Specific habitat-management techniques for some species can be found in DeGraaf et al. (2007), other chapters in this manual, and the Habitat Stewardship Series by UNH Cooperative Extension.

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- Some modification of forestry practices may be necessary to conserve, protect, or enhance the habitat for rare species. In many cases, simple modifications of routine forestry operations will satisfy species needs. These modifications may involve changing the timing (after nesting) or season (frozen ground) of the operation. They may include selecting a different silvicultural technique or changing the individual trees that are cut. In some situations leaving the area uncut may be the best option.
- Targeting management for one particular species may not meet the needs of other desired species.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ To find what SGCN species could live on your property, based on habitat and geographic location, check the *Wildlife Action Plan* and documents by NHF&G, UNH Cooperative Extension and others. DeGraaf and Yamasaki (2001) is a resource for natural history information.
- ✓ Survey your property for species and habitats. Check with the N.H. Natural Heritage Bureau for any documented threatened or endangered wildlife species. Ask NHF&G biologists for advice, especially if planning a timber harvest. Incorporate habitat management for SGCN species into your management plan and management activities.
- ✓ When possible, look beyond property boundaries to consider landscape-scale opportunities, including working with neighbors to conserve SGCN species.
- ✓ Each wildlife species has specific habitat requirements, making general recommended practices difficult to identify. A few selected species that use forested habitats are discussed in other chapters. See appendix, *Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need*, for those species and where to find that information. Check the species profiles in the *Wildlife Action Plan (Appendix A)* for basic habitat needs. Seek other resources on habitat needs from NHF&G, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or UNH Cooperative Extension.

CROSS REFERENCES

4.2 Wetlands; 4.3 Forest Management in Riparian Areas; 6.2 Cavity Trees, Dens and Snags; 7.3 Vernal Pools; 7.4 Pine Barren; 7.5 Old-Growth Forests; 7.6 High-Elevation Forests; Appendix—Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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