

# Managing Forests for Wildlife



*Wildlife biologists consider the American woodcock an “umbrella” species, meaning that protecting its habitat also helps the many other wildlife species—from wood turtles to chestnut-sided warblers—that need young forest.*

**S**ome wildlife species, like the American woodcock, need the dense shrubs and saplings of young forests for shelter, food, and nesting sites. Other species, like the wood thrush and pileated woodpecker, prefer the bigger trees, snags, and downed logs of mature forests. Still others, like the wild turkey, depend on a mix of habitats. In Groton State Forest, forest managers work to balance the varied needs of Vermont’s native wildlife species.

Of the 40 shrubland bird species in the Northeast, 22 have experienced significant population declines in recent decades. American woodcock populations have dropped by 40% since 1980, largely due to loss of young forests here in their northern breeding grounds. In the woodland below you, forest managers use various cutting techniques to nurture this habitat.



Wood turtle



Chestnut-sided warbler



Bobcat

## Discover Woodcock Habitat

Visit a grassy opening near a forest thicket at dusk in early spring, and you may be lucky enough to witness the American woodcock’s courtship display. Listen for the male’s nasal “peent” and watch as he dazzles potential mates by flying as high as 100 yards into the air and spiraling to the ground, his wing feathers whistling. Woodcock not only court and nest in young forests—they also find food and shelter in the dense undergrowth. The woodcock’s long bill has a flexible tip, superbly adapted for finding earthworms, a favorite food.

## Woodcock Management Demonstration Area

In 1984, forest managers began creating a series of strip- and patch-cuts in the forested area below this vista point (pictured in the aerial photo, right). These cuts are growing back as dense stands of paper and yellow birch, sugar and red maple, aspen, and black cherry. Along the logging roads and log landings, male woodcock court their mates. Hens nest and rear their young in the cut-over areas, protected by dense leaf cover. Forest managers are restoring the four-acre gravel pit near the center of this management area, creating further shrubland habitat, as well as a ground-roosting area for woodcock.



*Cutting mature alder to encourage new growth.*



*Young forests soon grow into mature forests. That’s why forest managers regularly create new openings in this demonstration area to maintain the dense new growth needed by woodcock and other shrubland species. (2011 NAIP Natural Color Imagery for Vermont.)*

