

SUPPORTING WILDLIFE IN YOUR BACKYARD

HOW TO BEST PROVIDE FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER

DO YOU KNOW?

Small Maine landowners are essential to wildlife conservation. Your actions can impact your community's natural environment in many positive ways. On a small scale, you can set up a bird feeder. On a larger scale, you can improve living conditions for many types of wildlife by promoting the growth of certain types of trees. What do all living things need to survive? Food, water and shelter! Your woodlot provides these. When making changes to your property keep in mind trees and wet areas that benefit wildlife's three primary needs of food, water, and shelter.

WILDLIFE ESSENTIALS

Food needs vary from one wildlife species to another. For example, some birds eat only certain types of seeds, while others eat only insects. Artificially feeding wildlife can cause more harm than good since animals easily become dependent on these food sources. To best support wildlife in the long run, manage the plants in your woodlot to provide these various feeding opportunities. The mast, or fruit and nut, tree information below will assist you in planting foliage to aid wildlife nutrition.



Water availability is important, especially during the warm, summer months when areas become unusually dry. Make sure to provide access for wildlife to reach a natural or artificial water source. A water source, something as simple as a birdbath or a large bowl, can attract a variety of animals year round. Riparian areas or water features discussed below will aid you in establishing opportunities for nourishment.



Shelter is the place where animals can rest safely and care for their young, much in the same way people do. As a landowner you have the opportunity to create new protection and cover for different wildlife species on your property. Shelter may be anything from a den in a hillside for a red fox, to low-lying evergreen branches for a snowshoe hare, to fallen leaves on the forest floor for wood frogs. The snag, or dead tree, information below will help you establish a homey wildlife sanctuary.



RESOURCES

This fact sheet was synthesized from information gathered by the Maine Forest Service. Learn more by reading "The Woods in your Backyard, A Homeowners Guide" found here—http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/woods_in_your_backyard.html.

Need help mapping your land or keeping track of all your woodlot to-dos? MyLandPlan.org provides the tools you need to not only map and journal about your woodlot but, you can also set goals, communicate with natural resource professionals and find additional support.

Have more questions regarding your Maine land, contact Christine Cadigan, Senior Manager, Woodland Conservation at ccadigan@forestfoundation.org or visit our website at <http://www.MyBaldwinWoods.org>.



WOODLAND FEATURES THAT PROVIDE WILDLIFE ESSENTIALS

Mast trees and shrubs are those that produce fruit, nuts, or seeds eaten by wildlife. Oak, beech, pin cherry, wild apple, shad brush, winter berry, hawthorn, and dogwood are examples of food species in Maine. Some wildlife, like wild turkeys, moose, and bears seek fruit and nuts for a large part of their diets. With proper management, like pruning and thinning out adjacent trees and shrubs, you can encourage food species to produce more food for wildlife on your property. Edges and borders of distinct natural areas are often a good place to concentrate your efforts.

Riparian areas (the wet edges of pools, marshes, and creeks) that form water features on your woodlot are home to plants and animals that cannot live elsewhere. These wet areas, typically 300 foot wide zones where woods meet streams and lakes, are important to more kinds of wildlife than any other habitat type in Maine. These features provide one of the main necessities for survival—water! They also provide shelter. Many breeding and nesting song birds, marsh birds, and ducks rely on riparian sections, while other wildlife use the cover provided by riparian areas to travel across otherwise open fields from one set of woods to another.

Snags, or dead standing trees, provide homes for 58 species of wildlife in Maine. Woodpeckers, chickadees, and other birds pick insects off the decaying bark and some birds and owls use the same snag as a nesting site year after year. Some wildlife have the skills to make their own nests in the cavities of trees while others depend on natural tree holes or previously occupied nests. Hawks also use snags for hunting viewpoints and moles burrow beneath their roots. As snags decay, they add nutrients to the soil and encourage new plants and trees to grow.



LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF IMPROVING THE WILDLIFE HABITAT ON YOUR PROPERTY

Improving habitat allows wildlife to get what they need when they need it. For example, if you feed birds at a feeder, adding a widespread variety of food trees and plants reduces stiff competition at the feeder where less aggressive birds often lose out in the fight for food.

Providing wildlife habitat can appear to be a daunting task. However, it is important to keep in mind that your woodlot may be better suited to provide a healthy and useful environment for certain types of wildlife, more than others. In other words, cutting some trees in one specific location may benefit some wildlife species, whereas leaving the trees in other areas will benefit different species. Combined, your property and the rest of the community can provide diverse shelter, water and food for many different kinds of wildlife.

It is unlikely that you will be able to provide habitat for everything on just a few acres. However, through wise management practices, you will be able to provide one or more essential habitat requirements for several different wildlife species. And what are they again? Food, water, shelter!

Perhaps your neighbors can fill a habitat necessity if their woodlot has a water source and you don't, but you can still develop essential cover for many species that visit your neighbors for a drink. Take the time to speak to your neighbors about your plans and see if they are interested in a joint effort. If you get them interested in improving wildlife habitat, your combined efforts will have an even bigger impact— particularly for species that need more than just a few acres to survive.

DO YOU ALSO KNOW?

How much an animal roams is determined by what they eat, how much water they need, how much shelter is available and how much room they need to manage their daily existence. As a landowner, you and your neighbors are providing these necessities to maintain a healthy wildlife presence.

