

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2009 Annual Report

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Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2009

The New Hampshire Coverts Project is a program that trains volunteers to promote wildlife and habitat conservation and forest stewardship.

This report details Coverts Project programs in 2009, and summarizes efforts made by Coverts volunteers to bring the message of wildlife stewardship to a wide range of people across New Hampshire. A brief summary of this report, “Coverts Project - Program Highlights 2009” is included in the Appendix.

The New Hampshire Coverts Project continues to be one of the most effective ways to broaden the outreach efforts of UNH Cooperative Extension and its partners. The NH Coverts Project is a flagship program for Extension that expands with each year’s trained class of Cooperators.



Project Background

Since 1995, the New Hampshire Coverts Project has promoted wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship through volunteer education and outreach. The goal of the NH Coverts Project is to enhance, maintain, and conserve habitat for the rich diversity of native wildlife in NH through sound land stewardship.

Funding and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), the NH Division of Forests and Lands, and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department including funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Incentive Program. In 2009, the program also received contributions from the NH Charitable Foundation’s Wellborn Ecology Fund, the Quality Deer Management Association, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s NH Implementation Team. A part-time staff person coordinates the program (Malin Clyde), while the UNHCE wildlife specialist oversees the project (Matt Tarr). The project also receives assistance from a network of 10 county foresters, the Extension specialist in forest resources (Karen Bennett), and the Wildlife Program Assistant (Emma Carcagno).

Each spring, applications are sent to prospective participants for the fall Coverts training workshop. Potential applicants are recruited by Extension staff, project partners, Coverts alumni, letters to town decision-makers, press releases, and through events. Selection criteria include the applicant’s enthusiasm for wildlife and natural resources, a willingness to commit to outreach, and a recognized leadership role within their community. A copy of the 2009 application form is included in the Appendix.

Summary of Coverts Applications – 2009

Applications sent out	141
Number of Applicants	29
Number Accepted for Training	25
Number Attending Training	23



Annual Coverts Training Workshop - 2009

For the first time in over a decade, the Coverts Project Training Workshop had to seek a new facility due to the closing of Boston University's Sargent Center. Luckily, we identified a suitable facility in the same region that turned out to be ideal.

We held the 2009 Coverts Workshop at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on September 23-26, 2009. The site offered excellent facilities and was close enough to our well-established field sites that we were able to host a smooth and seamless workshop despite the new location. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2009 workshop agenda, which includes a list of instructors and field trip hosts who assisted with the 3 ½-day training workshop.

Upon completion of the workshop, each Cooperator completes an evaluation of the workshop, used to gain feedback on both the workshop as a whole and on topics, materials, and speakers during the 3 ½ day training. Feedback on the facility and the contents of the workshop was excellent. A copy of the workshop evaluation form is included in the Appendix.

The cost of the workshop, including food, lodging, transportation, and reference materials, is entirely funded by grants from our partners. This "debt" encourages strong allegiance and commitment by the volunteers: in exchange for the workshop opportunity, participants agree to become Coverts volunteers and spend 40+ hours volunteering on behalf of the program during the following year. Each Cooperator develops an outreach plan on how they will share their experiences and motivate others in their community.



2009 New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2010

Below is list of the new 2009 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a brief description of some of the outreach ideas they are planning to execute as a Coverts volunteer in 2010:

Amy Bodwell, Roxbury – as a new landowner, she hopes to get to know her neighbors and to work collaboratively with them to improve and diversity the habitat on their lands.

Isabel Brintnall – plans to update the management plan for her property, including re-thinking the short and long term goals based on what she learned at the Coverts workshop. She also looks forward to meeting with Extension professionals to walk her land with an eye towards habitat features such as vernal pools.

Mary Anne Broshek, Andover – plans to share the information from Coverts with her fellow conservation commission members, and to start a regular series of articles for the town paper focused on wildlife, forests, and available resources for the public to learn more.

Bill Clough, Wilmot – as an easement monitor for a local land trust, Bill noticed that the land he monitors happens to abut another 2009 Coverts Cooperator's land. Bill looks forward to comparing notes about the ecological connection between the properties, particularly regarding turtle habitat.

Mike Ducubellis, Lyndeborough – will invite his County Forester to provide habitat improvement recommendations for his property. He also plans to continue his work on the Conservation Commission, and to work towards stewardship plans for Town Forests in his town.

Indra Edmonds, Strafford – plans to create a management plan for her family's property, to connect with her County Forester, and to get involved with the local land trust in her region.

George Edson, Cornish – plans to practice using the knowledge gained at the Coverts Workshop to lead a property tour during his family’s annual Columbus Day Weekend Family reunion.

Will Fenno, Sharon – plans to begin arrangements for a conservation easement on his last unrestricted woodlot, and to encourage neighboring landowners to create a partnership for a larger conservation project.

Becca Goodson – Wants to map the habitats on her property, work on her identification skills, and work to create new woodcock habitat and enhance the available habitat for raptors, woodpeckers, and grouse.

Pete Helm, Canaan – as a land trust professional, Pete looks forward to incorporating information from the Coverts workshop into management plans for properties owned by the trust.

Laurie Lalish, Northwood – plans to develop a habitat management plan on her own land, and to share that work with neighbors through her volunteer work with a local conservation group. She looks forward to leading habitat-focused walks in the spring with new insight provided by what she learned at the Coverts workshop.

Linda Lauer, Bath – looks forward to offering wildlife-related talks through the granges in her area. She also wants to get involved in inventory work on the Town Forest, with a goal of improving trails and access to the property. She also wants to release some of the oaks on her property to improve the mast crop.

Charlie Mitchell, Gilmanton – plans to expand his current stewardship plan to include an additional 360 acres, with a focus on wildlife habitat. He also will continue the ongoing and intensive habitat work on his property to benefit woodcock, whip-poor-will, and other species of conservation concern with an end goal of offering tours of the property’s many successional stages to help educate people about the habitat value of wildlife openings.

Juliana & Mark Phillips, Webster – have plans to create a land management plan for thier property, including habitat management for grouse and woodcock. They are also hoping to encourage other family members to think about wildlife and habitat on their neighboring parcels.

Frank Stevens, Ashland – plans to make his property a habitat demonstration area, creating a map of the property that includes detailed habitat and vegetation succession information. He also looks forward to applying new information to his work with a local conservation group on whose Lands Committee he serves.

George Tombarello, Loudon - plans to host a field trip and pig roast for other Coverts Cooperators on his property.

John Trachy, Springfield – looks forward to using information from Coverts to inform his community conservation work, particularly raising awareness about town-owned forests and helping to identify conservation priorities using the NH Wildlife Action Plan.

Jenny Tuthill, Alexandria – wants to work with neighboring landowners and try to get all the properties into a conservation easement that could encompass over 500 acres of protected land.

Martha Twombly, Hebron – looks forward to inviting the County Forester to her property to better understand her stewardship goals and management options.

Marc White, Orford – will begin a dialog with his County Forester, and wants to revise his land stewardship plan with input from his children regarding long-term goals for timber and wildlife habitat.

Tom Woodward, New Durham – will be exploring community education needs for workshops on land management with an aim towards raising awareness about public lands in town. Schools and scout troops are other audiences he’s interested in working with.

Susan Yakutis – plans to use the information and knowledge gained at Coverts to inform her work on the town Master Plan, making sure it includes language on forest stewardship and information from the Wildlife Action Plan. She also plans to work with a local school on several ecological monitoring projects.



Active Coverts Cooperators

Cooperators become part of a volunteer network connected through newsletters, the internet, field tours, and continuing education workshops. After some attrition (due to dropouts, re-locations, deaths, etc.), we have 282 active volunteers today, working in 134 different communities around the state – see map on page 6. A list of all active Coverts volunteers (by County) is included in the Appendix. A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2009

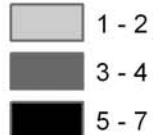
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	364
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/09	282
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/09	134

Coverts Cooperators 1995 - 2009

Location of Volunteers
&
Location of Land Stewardship

Coverts Participation

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Coverts Land Stewardship

Acres Owned or Managed, by Town



Total Acres Owned: 46,200 ac.

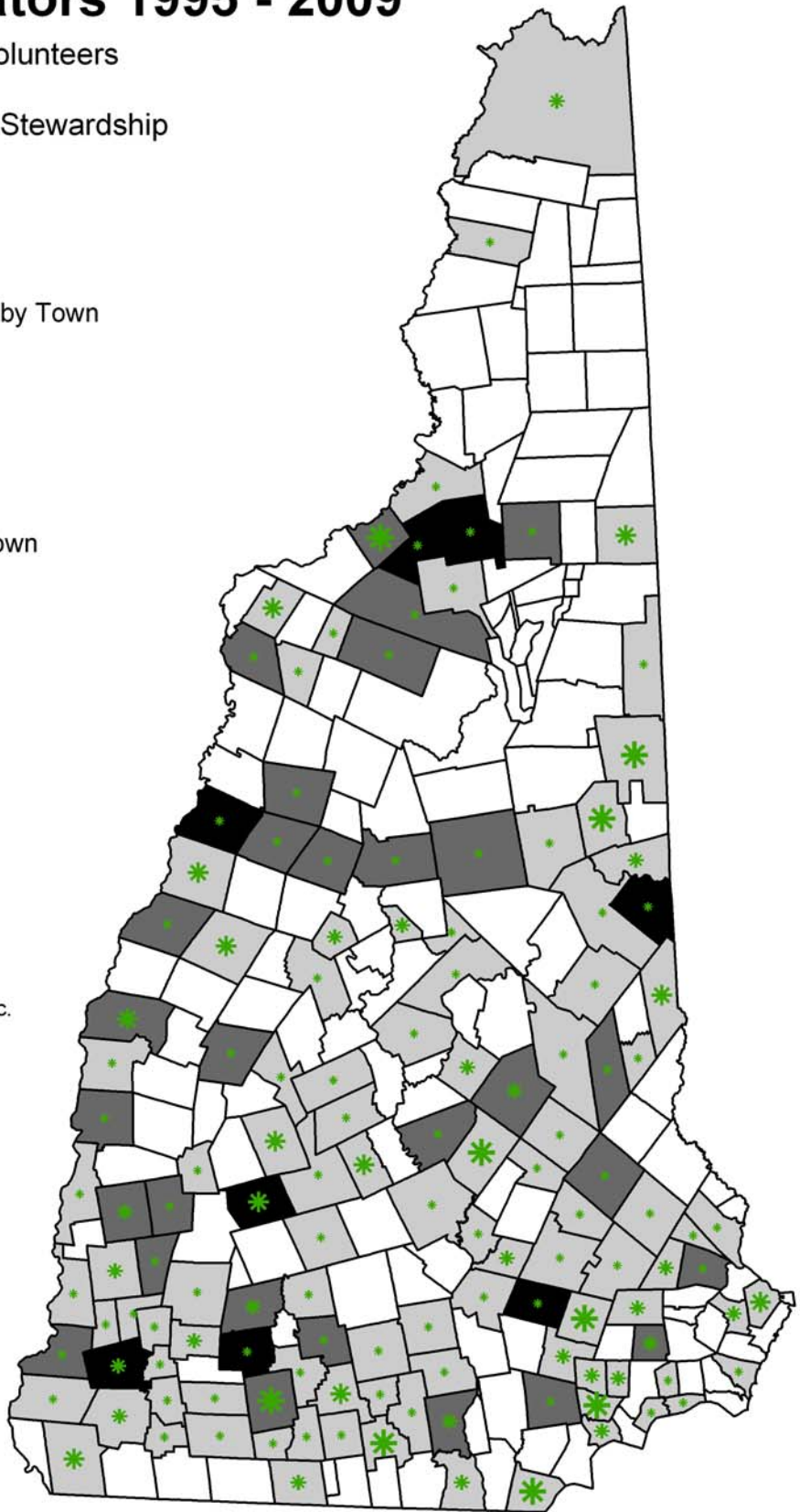
Avg. size of Ownership: 163 ac.

Total Acres Managed: 65,000 ac.

Avg. Size of Management: 232 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship: 111,200 ac.

Due to data collection constraints, actual land stewardship information may be located in more than town, but is shown as being in one town.



Updated 1/1/10
09AR_Map.mxd



2009 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

The Coverts Project connects Coverts Cooperators to many events and workshops throughout the year. Through these activities, they build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training workshop. Many of these workshops are a result of UNH Cooperative Extension partnering with other natural resource volunteer programs, thereby broadening our training audience and offering more continuing education opportunities to all of our natural resource volunteers.

Coverts Blog, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife” – Begun two years ago, the Coverts Project continues to host a blog on the Coverts webpage. A sample page is shown below. The direct address for the blog is: http://extension.unh.edu/blogs/volunteers_working_for_wildlife/

The blog functions as an on-going bulletin board of Coverts announcements, workshops, and volunteer opportunities. The blog postings are also sent directly to Coverts Cooperators through email, but the blog allows volunteers to view past postings from any computer, any time, including historical posts.

The Coverts listserv continues to be used by Cooperators to publicize local workshops on their own, ask questions, and get feedback about natural resource issues.

Continuing Education Statistics for 2009

Number of Blog Posts/Updates	25
Number of Listserv Posts	30
Volunteer Opportunities Publicized	24
New Publication Alerts	10
Workshop Announcements (UNHCE-sponsored)	42
Workshop Announcements (other groups & partners)	62
Workshops designed for Coverts Volunteers (e.g. Alumni gatherings)	3
Total continuing education opportunities offered to Coverts in 2008	147



Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2009: “Taking Action for Wildlife”

Coverts Cooperators are selected to participate in the program based on their commitment and enthusiasm for wildlife conservation and forest stewardship. It is therefore no surprise that Coverts volunteers are involved in a wide range of natural resource-related activities, putting the knowledge and skills gained or refined at the annual training workshop to work in their communities.

We present the following summary of Coverts volunteer accomplishments for 2009 based on the results from our **annual survey**, which Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). Coverts Cooperators also sent in more than 18 written updates and articles for inclusion in our program newsletter, *Making Tracks* (see copy of the 2009 issue included in the Appendix). Our survey response rate was down this year (36%, down from an average of 47%), likely due to the fact that, in an effort to save on mailing costs, we opted not to do extensive follow up mailings to non-respondents (used email reminders only).

Coverts Survey Responses in 2009 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2009 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	282
# Cooperators returning surveys	102 (36%)
Total Volunteer Hours in past 12 months (“on behalf of forest stewardship or wildlife habitat issues”)	9016 (avg. 88 hours per volunteer)

New Opportunities to Volunteer – “Speaking for Wildlife” Project

The Coverts blog helped facilitate many new volunteer opportunities for Coverts Cooperators. Along with notices about volunteering for other conservation groups, the Coverts Project also embarked on a new volunteer project called “**Speaking for Wildlife**,” with support from a new grant from the NH Charitable Foundation’s Wellborn Ecology Fund. This pilot project in the Upper Valley Region (Sullivan & Grafton counties) provides training, support, and equipment so Coverts volunteers can deliver wildlife presentations and field walks to local groups in their communities. To date, sixteen Coverts volunteers have been trained and have now begun delivering programs in their towns. A brochure about the program is provided in the Appendix, and more information is available at a new website developed for the program at: <http://extension.unh.edu/Wildlife/SFW.htm>

Among other new volunteer opportunities, a few examples from 2009:

- Monitoring of New England cottontail rabbit populations (pellet surveys)
- “Energy Answers” training
- Asian longhorn beetle monitoring
- Floodplain restoration volunteering on Lamprey River

2009 Coverts Accomplishments: Land Stewardship

Many Coverts Cooperators own or manage land and incorporate wildlife habitat management and good forest stewardship into their land management. One volunteer wrote this year:

Stewardship

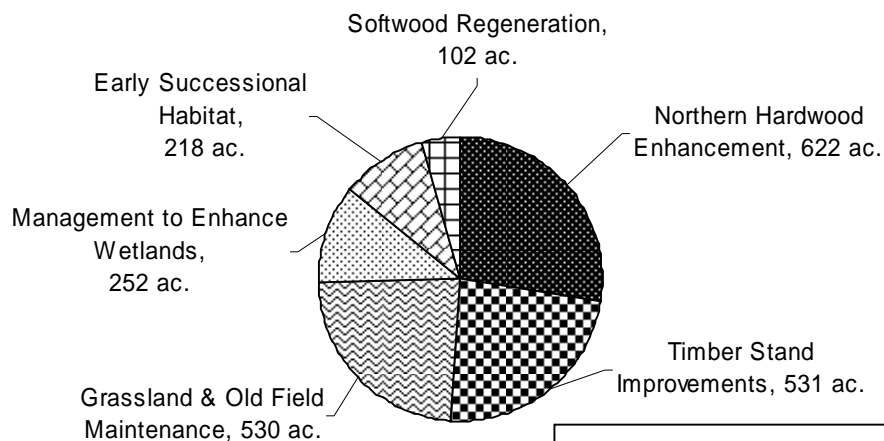
“With an (EQIP) Environmental Quality Incentives Program grant to help, we made progress on our wildlife habitat management plan: woods roads constructed; delayed mowing; planning for apple tree release and ‘soft edges’ in riparian/field border; creating a 1-acre bobwhite nesting area in middle of field by liming and fertilizing - all through consultation with foresters and wildlife biologists. Next year will include a pollinator garden.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2009 Survey Respondents
Acres Owned by survey respondents	15,320 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	35,400 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	73 (72% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned (see map, p. 5)	46,200 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed (see map, p. 5)	65,500 acres

The chart below shows the habitat management activities and acres of land managed by Coverts Cooperators who responded to the survey this year:

Wildlife Habitat Management by Coverts Volunteers: Acres Managed in 2009



- Total acres managed in '09: **2,255 ac.**
- Acres inventoried in '09: **15,550 ac.**
- Fruit trees & shrubs released in '09: **416**

2009 Coverts Accomplishments: Community Conservation

Many Coverts Cooperators serve as local decision-makers and help initiate or implement conservation actions in their communities. This has become a critical role for Coverts volunteers, as more and more towns in southern and central New Hampshire face threats to wildlife through urban sprawl, habitat loss, and forest fragmentation. One Coverts Cooperators reported this year:

“I became chair of [my town’s] Conservation Commission shortly after completing the Coverts program last fall. I felt more comfortable in doing so after talking with other Coverts Cooperators who were Conservation Commission members at the workshop. I put up a Conservation Commission bulletin board up at the Town Hall and have just got a CC page on the town web site. Still working on my CC members to motivate them into taking a more active stance on land protection. I am also an easement monitor for [my local land trust].”

Community Conservation Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	Total 2009 Survey Respondents
Serving on Conservation Commissioners	38 (40% of respondents)
Serving on town planning, zoning, board of selectmen, watershed, or open space board	15
Served on open space, land trust or conservation group board	36
Helped complete a town natural resource inventory or habitat inventory	26
Helped manage town or Conservation Land	45
Involved in watershed association/river coalition or other water resources group	25
# of acres Coverts respondents helped conserve in 2008	5,600 acres protected

2009 Coverts Accomplishments: Raising Public Awareness

Coverts Cooperators engage in many activities that promote forest stewardship and wildlife conservation to their families, friends, peers, and community members. One media-savvy Coverts Cooperator reported this year:

I co-host a show on our local community radio station, which we estimate has 400 listeners at a time. Especially in the spring, I do a lot of reporting on local land use issues because I go out and do vernal pool monitoring and I report back about the habitats, what I saw, how these animals need specific habitats and how vital they are to the food chain. I also invite local land use organizations to come and speak about their programs. And, I go out in the community and record presentations made at public forums and rebroadcast them on the radio.

Raising Public Awareness Statistics:

Raising Public Awareness: Practices Instigated in 2009 by Coverts Volunteers	Total 2009 Survey Respondents
Led field tours on their own land	18
Hosted or presented public programs in their communities	34
Involved in media interviews related to stewardship or wildlife, including newspaper articles, local TV broadcasts, or regular columns	34
Staffed natural resources exhibits	24
Held personal conversations with neighbors or friends about stewardship	82
Distributed written materials to others on wildlife or stewardship topics	40
Participated in the Tree Farm, Community Tree Stewards, Master Gardener, or Project Learning Tree	36
Participated in a Natural Resource Monitoring Program, such as for Reptiles and Amphibians (RAARP), Audubon bird surveys, etc.	24
Volunteer for other conservation organizations	58
Estimate of # of people reached with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	37,000 (avg. 363 per volunteer)



Coverts Project Initiatives for 2010

Communication – With more and more of today’s communication happening on the internet, the Coverts Project is focusing more on our email updates, blog, and postings to the Coverts webpage. We look forward to expanding the presence of training and demonstration videos posted on our website.

Despite an emphasis on improving computer communication, we still mail copies of emailed updates to those volunteers (only about 20 individuals) who do not have access to email. Part of this evolution has meant reducing the publication of the “Making Tracks” newsletter to 1-2 issues per year.

Improving Volunteer Opportunities – We are seeking additional grant funding to expand the well-received “Speaking for Wildlife” outreach program to several new parts of New Hampshire.

Continuing Education - In 2010, we will offer continue our workshop series focused on stewardship of critical habitats, as outlined in the NH Wildlife Action Plan. Associated with our new series of brochures, these workshops include stewardship guidance for wildlife habitats such as shrublands, lowland spruce-fir forests, peatlands, headwater streams, and others.

Annual Training Workshop – We will return to the Barbara C. Harris Center for the Coverts training in 2010, as the response to the new facility was positive and the price very competitive.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Advisory Committee meets once a year to discuss emerging issues and new ideas for the continued success of the program. Committee meeting notes are available to all Coverts Cooperators (and the public) on the Coverts webpage.

Updates – The Project Coordinator will continue yearly updates to all project partners, according to reporting guidelines issued by each. The report is promoted and made available to Coverts Cooperators on the Coverts webpage, www.NHCoverts.org. Also available on the website is a **Highlights Report**, summarizing the 2009 annual report. This shortened version will increasingly be used to concisely describe the impact of the Coverts Project on New Hampshire’s wildlife, forests, and communities.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2009

Includes:

- [Program Brochure](#)
- [2009 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2009 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2009 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- 2009 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form
- List of Active Coverts Cooperators by County
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey– 2009](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)
- [Making Tracks Newsletter – July 2009.](#)