

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2007 Annual Report

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UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



The New Hampshire Coverts Project is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, New Hampshire Fish & Game, New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, Quality Deer Management Association, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

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Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2007

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 2007, along with the substantial efforts made by our dedicated and accomplished group of Coverts volunteers, bringing the wildlife stewardship message to a wide range of people across the state of New Hampshire.

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.

New for 2007, an abbreviated summary of the 2007 annual report is available on the NH Coverts Project website: NHCoverts.org.



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 support and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), NH Division of Forests and Lands, and New Hampshire Fish and Game Department including funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Incentive Program. New in 2007, the Coverts Project also attracted financial support from the Quality Deer Management Association. A half-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 and the Extension specialist in forest resources (Karen Bennett).

Each spring, applications are sent to prospective participants for the fall Coverts training workshop. Potential applicants are recruited by Extension staff, project partner staff, existing Coverts Cooperators, letters to town decision-makers, press releases, and through Coverts-related events. The major selection criteria are 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 2007 application form is included in the Appendix.

Summary of Coverts Applications – 2007

Number of Applicants	34
Number Accepted for Training	25
Number Attending Training	23 (2 dropped during workshop due to illness)



Annual Coverts Training Workshop - 2007

Boston University's Sargent Center, located in Hancock, NH, continues to provide an ideal setting for the annual Coverts training workshop, held on September 5-8, 2007. This site has become a tradition for the Coverts workshop, as it offers both reliable facilities and excellent and diverse field sites to public, private, and non-profit owned lands. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2007 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. 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.

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 240 active volunteers today, working in 120 communities around the state – see map, following. A list of all active Coverts volunteers (by County) is included in the Appendix. A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2007

Training Year	Number of Coverts Cooperators 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
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	316

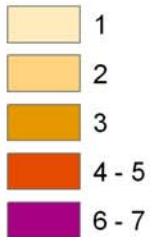
Coverts Cooperators 1995 - 2007

Location of Volunteers & Impacts of Land Stewardship

Legend

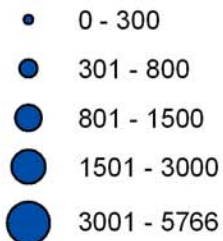
Coverts Participation

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Coverts Impact on Land Stewardship

Acres Owned of Managed, by Town

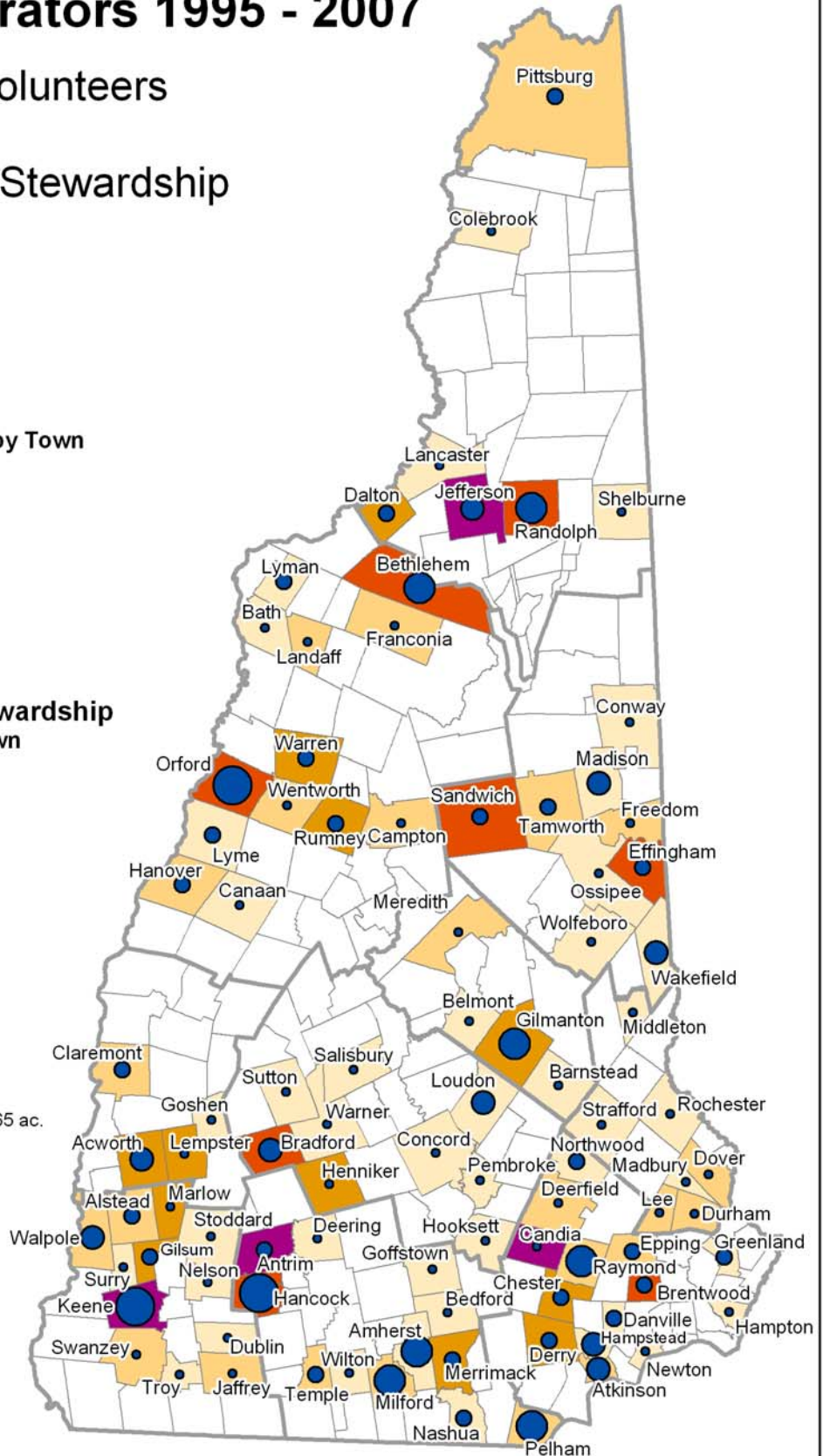


Total acres owned by Coverts: 43,343 ac.

Total acres managed by Coverts: 50,222 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship by Coverts: 93,565 ac.

Due to data collection constraints, actual land stewardship location for individual owners or managers are aggregated into a single town.





2007 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

Coverts Cooperators are encouraged and invited to events and workshops throughout the year which help them build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training workshop. The programs and events provide an opportunity for Coverts volunteers to meet with program partners, natural resource professionals, and to reunite with other Coverts Cooperators. 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 workshop opportunities to all of our natural resource volunteers.

2007 Events and Workshops Promoted Through the NH Coverts Project

January 6	Winter Tree & Twig ID, Auburn
January 20	Winter Tree ID, Portsmouth
Feb. 3	NH Coverts Project Advisory Committee, Manchester
Feb. 3	Ben Kilham on Black Bears, Manchester
Feb. 2-3	NH Farm & Forest Expo, Manchester
Feb. 24	Winter Tree ID, Canterbury
March 1	Climate Change & Working Forests
March 6	Land Conservation & Estate Planning - Antrim
March 9	Wildlife Action Plan Mapping Workshop – Concord
March 20	Wildlife Action Plan Mapping Workshop – Concord
March 31	Introduction to NH’s Wildlife Action Plan – Westmoreland
April 14	Bird ID & Habitat – New Boston
April 14	Saving Special Places - annual land conservation conference
April 22	Discover Wild NH Day – booth staffed by Coverts volunteers
May 5	Intro. to NH’s Wildlife Action Plan workshop – Rochester
May 6	Bare-root Tree Planting Workshop - Canterbury
May 10	Songbird Walk – Lancaster
May 11	Vernal Pools & Wetland Habitats – Hampstead
May 12	Tree Farm Tour (hosted by Coverts Cooperator), Epping
May 15	Annual Mud Season Foresters Breakfast – Lancaster
May 17&18	ID Birds by Sight & Sound - Concord
May 19	NH Dragonfly Survey Project Workshop - Auburn
May 21	NH Dragonfly Survey Project Workshop – Amherst
May 22&23	Aerial Photograph Interpretation – Durham
May 22	Mapping Habitats for Conservation Planning - Bath
May 26	Birds of Managed Forests - Bartlett
May 31	NH Dragonfly Survey Project Workshop - Brentwood
June 1-2	E4 Conference: Exploring your Woodland Opportunities, Plymouth
June 2	Intro. to NH’s Wildlife Action Plan workshop – Lancaster
June 2	Introduction to Creating Wildlife Food Plots - Walpole
June 9	Getting to Know Your Woodlot – Tamworth, Westmoreland
June 16	Tree & Shrub ID – Tamworth, Westmoreland

June 19	Tree Farm Tour (hosted by Coverts Cooperator), Bedford
June 23	Choosing Trees to Cut – Tamworth, Westmoreland
July 13	Conservation Easement Stewardship & Navigation - Chester
July 20	Managing Wildlife Habitat on your Land – Plainfield
July 27	Town Forests & Wildlife Habitat Management - Salem
Aug. 9	Evening (Early-Successional) Habitat Walk – Northfield
Aug. 10	Identifying Sedges and Rushes – Durham
Aug. 10	Behind Every Good Coast Is An Estuary, Great Bay! - Greenland
Aug. 17	Vernal Pool Documentation and ID – Henniker
Aug. 18	Woods, Water & Wildlife Festival – Milton Mills
Aug. 22&24	Identifying Grasses – Durham
Aug. 24	Invasive Species ID – Portsmouth
Sept. 10-11	Carbon & Forestry in the Northeast – Fairlee, VT
Sept. 13	Land Conservation & Estate Planning - Wolfeboro
Sept. 22	Tree Farm Field Day (hosted by Coverts Cooperators), Whitefield
Oct. 12	Conservation Strategies, Keene
Oct. 13	Introduction to Wildlife Habitat Improvement - Concord
Oct. 19	Selling Timber? Do it Right! Plainfield & Epsom
Oct. 20	Bartlett Experimental Forest Celebration - Bartlett
Oct 25	Pruning Workshop – Portsmouth
Oct. 26	Forest Stewardship & Management Planning – Stoddard
Oct. 27-28	Logging with Horses – 2-day intensive workshop – Loudon
Oct. 29	Protecting Shoreline Buffers – Greenland, Rochester, Manchester
Oct. 29	NH’s Wildlife Action Plan - Northwood
Nov. 2	Roads & Trails on Your Woodlot – Plainfield & Epsom
Nov. 2	Wildlife Habitat & Forest Management - Roxbury
Nov. 3	NH Association of Conservation Commissions Annual Conference
Nov. 9	Your Woodlot & Wildlife – Plainfield & Epsom
Nov. 27	NH Children in Nature Initiative, Concord
Dec. 15	Winter Tree ID - Rollingsford
On-going	GIS & GPS technology workshops offered through UNHCE’s “Geospatial Technologies Training Center”
On-going	NH Outside Writers Collaborative (trainings offered April 26, 27)
On-going	Coverts listserv Forum (189 Coverts volunteers & partners participating)



Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2007

Coverts Cooperators are selected into 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 2007 based on the results from our annual survey that Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). Coverts Cooperators also sent in over 50 written updates and articles for inclusion in our program newsletter, *Making Tracks* (see copies included in the Appendix).

Survey responses in 2007 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2007 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	220
# Cooperators returning surveys	115 (52%)*
Total Volunteer Hours in past 12 months ("on behalf of forest stewardship or wildlife habitat issues")	12,083 hours (avg. 105 hrs. per volunteer)

*average response rate since 1995 is 47%

New Opportunities to Volunteer

The Coverts Project is working to improve information for Coverts Cooperators about new opportunities or areas in which to volunteer. In 2007, we promoted several new projects including:

- NH State Parks Great Park Pursuit: No Child Left Inside (May 19 – June 23)
- Work with NH Fish & Game & Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership on building bog bridges (Oct. 20)
- Volunteer position as photo editor for NH Audubon (Oct.)
- Fish & Game wildlife monitoring opportunities (Oct.)
- Collaboration with Project Learning Tree at a high school in Concord (Dec.)
- NH Outside Writer's Collaborative - new training workshops held April 17 & April 26

2007 Coverts Accomplishments: Land Stewardship

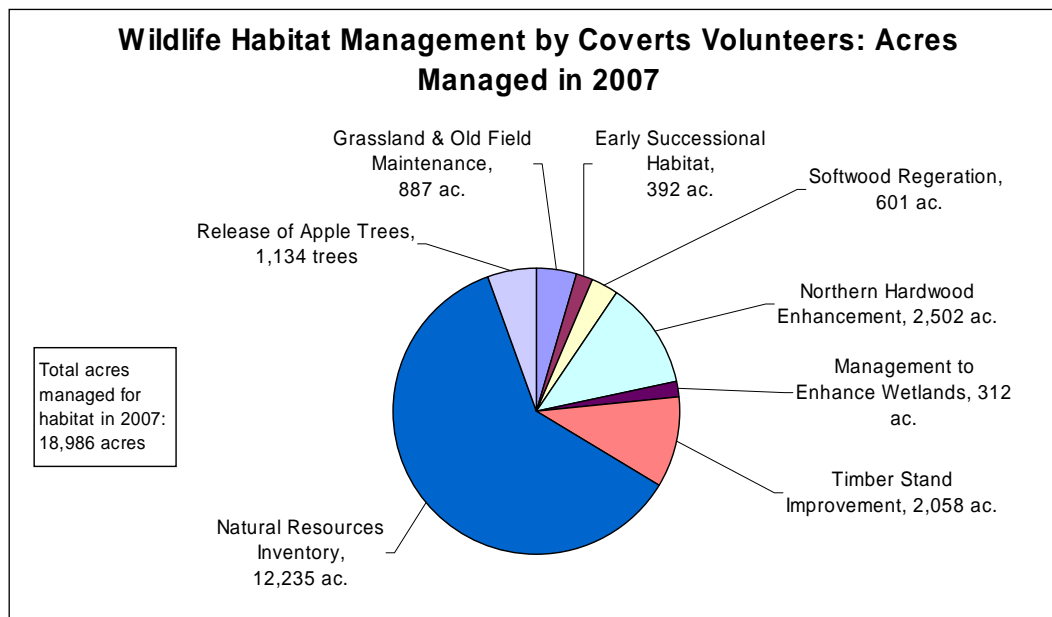
Many Coverts Cooperators own or manage land and incorporate wildlife habitat management and good forest stewardship into their land management. One volunteer wrote this year:

“My greatest accomplishment [this year] was the successful application for a WHIP grant from NRCS for 43 acres of fields and pastures. As of 5 years ago, we no longer harvest hay or graze cattle, and given mixed opinions within the extended family we were in danger of not maintaining the grasslands. I instigated this application process and carried it out in collaboration with one cousin after gaining approval from the rest. This process and the management plan decisions were complex. We have now completed the first mowing under the grant. This effort has also involved continuing research and conversations with wildlife experts due to disagreements within the family on timing of mowing.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2007 Survey Respondents
Total Acres Owned	16,433
Total Acres Responsible for Managing	30,621
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	62 (58%)

The chart below shows the habitat management activities and acres of land managed by Coverts Cooperators who responded to the survey this year. Including those Coverts who did not respond to the survey, but who are still active, the total amount land owned has reached over 43,343 acres, while land managed by ALL Coverts has reached over 50,222 acres (see map on p.3).



2007 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 am currently on [my town’s] Conservation Commission and chair the Forest Advisory Committee. We manage the 2,600+ acre Town Forest. This work Involves working with forester, coordinating volunteer work, encouraging low-impact recreation use, etc.”

Community Conservation Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	Total 2007 Survey Respondents
Serving on Conservation Commissioners	46 (43%)
Serving on town planning, zoning, board of selectmen, watershed, or open space board	9 (8%)
Served on open space, land trust or conservation group board	45 (42%)
Helped complete a town natural resource inventory or habitat inventory	34 (32%)
Helped manage town or Conservation Land	55 (42%)
Involved in watershed association/river coalition or other water resources group	41 (39%)
# of acres Coverts respondents helped conserve in 2006	15,688 (avg. 148 ac. per volunteer)

2007 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 Coverts Cooperator tells of a workshop she organized this year:

“I organized a Town Forest walk on our 79-acre parcel in Town. The talk was lead by the forester who created the management plan. Also, our county forester was present and added comments. Both answered questions from the 24 participants about managing forests for wildlife.”

Public Awareness Statistics:

Raising Public Awareness: Practices Instigated in 2007 by Coverts Volunteers	Total 2007 Survey Respondents
Led field tours on their own land	17
Hosted or presented public programs in their communities	35
Involved in media interviews related to stewardship or wildlife, including newspaper articles, local TV broadcasts, or regular columns	38
Staffed natural resources exhibits	24
Held personal conversations with neighbors or friends about stewardship	92
Distributed written materials to others on wildlife or stewardship topics	45
Participate in the Tree Farm, Community Tree Stewards, Master Gardener, or Backyard Tree Farmer programs	81
Volunteer for other conservation organizations	66
Estimate of # of people reached with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	42,894 (avg. 380 per volunteer)



Coverts Project Initiatives for 2008

Communication – Email and the Coverts listserv are increasingly important to our communication, both from the Coverts Project office *to* Coverts volunteers, and *among* volunteers through the listserv and email connections. Plans for 2008 include continuing bi-weekly email updates, and adding a permanent posting of these bulletins on the website in the form of a blog.

Improving Volunteer Opportunities – The Coverts Project is spearheading a new network of natural resource programs (the “Natural Resource Volunteer Network”) to better connect a variety of natural-resource volunteers (including Coverts volunteers) with new volunteer options, additional training opportunities, and to connect more meaningfully and locally with other volunteers.

Continuing Education - In 2008, we will be offering a variety of new workshops focused on stewardship of critical habitats, as outlined in the NH Wildlife Action Plan. Associated with a new series of brochures, these workshops include stewardship guidance for the following habitats in NH:

- Grasslands
- Vernal Pools
- Marsh & Shrub Wetlands
- Floodplain Forests

Annual Training Workshop – We will continue to use Sargent Center in 2008 for the workshop training site, as it offers reliable facilities and is located near excellent field sites (tentative dates are Sept. 3-6, 2008).

Making Tracks Newsletter – The Coverts Project newsletter will continue to be issued 2-3 times a year. The newsletter is an effective method of keeping our statewide volunteers, including those without access to the internet, connected to each other. Back issues of the newsletter are also available on the Coverts web site.

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 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 this year is a summary of the 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 2007

Includes:

- [Program Brochure](#)
- 2007 Coverts Application Form
- [2007 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- 2007 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form
- List of Active Coverts Cooperators by County
- Annual Coverts Activities Survey form - 2007
- Making Tracks Newsletters – [Sept.](#), [Dec.](#)