

# New Hampshire Coverts Project

## *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*



## 2005 Annual Report

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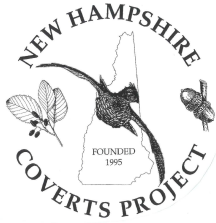
Dec. 1, 2005



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



The New Hampshire Coverts Project is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, New Hampshire Fish & Game, The Ruffed Grouse Society, New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



## Summary of 2005 Projects

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 2005, 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.

A summary of accomplishments in 2005 include:

- Organized the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Coverts Training Workshop and trained 26 new Coverts Cooperators from 26 different communities, bringing the statewide total to 242 active volunteers working in 122 different communities. Click below view a map summarizing [Coverts Cooperators' statewide distribution and land stewardship distribution to date](#).
- Held seven (7) continuing education workshops designed for Coverts alumni.
- Promoted participation by Coverts Cooperators in dozens of educational workshops organized by UNH Cooperative Extension and project partners, including workshops on land conservation, woodlot management, and wildlife inventorying and monitoring.
- Continued to manage email discussion forum ("listserv") for 145 participating Coverts Cooperators and natural resource professionals.
- Continued updates to Coverts web page as part of the UNH Cooperative Extension website, adding new publications.
- Published three editions of *Making Tracks* newsletter (Apr, Aug., Dec), with a goal of inspiring and encouraging creative and exciting new outreach projects.
- Showcased traveling Coverts exhibit at nine (9) different venues in 2005, using both staff and volunteer exhibitors
- For the second year in a row, the Outstanding NH Tree Farm (2005) was awarded to a Coverts Cooperator. The award went to Phillips Exeter Academy, whose Supervisor of Grounds is an active Coverts Cooperator who has directed land and habitat management for the past 20 years.
- Created internet forum for discussion among Coverts Programs from other states (listserv).



## Coverts Project Background

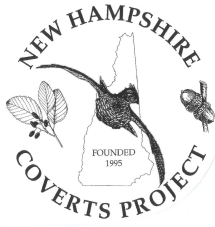
Since 1995, the New Hampshire Coverts Project has promoted wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship through volunteer education and outreach. The goal of the NH Coverts Project is to enhance, maintain, and conserve habitat for the rich diversity of native wildlife in NH through sound land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

Funding support and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), The Ruffed Grouse Society, 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. A half-time staff person coordinates the program, while the UNHCE wildlife specialist oversees the project. The project also receives assistance from a network of 10 county foresters and the Extension specialist in forest resources.

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 2005 application form is included in the Appendix.

### Summary of Coverts Applications - 2005

Number of Applicants	30
Number Accepted for Training	27
Number Attending Training	26



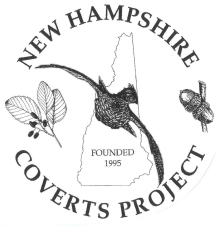
## Annual Coverts Training Workshop

Boston University’s Sargent Center, located in Hancock, NH, continues to provide an ideal setting for the annual Coverts training workshop, held this year September 7-10, 2005. 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 2005 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, along with a summary of the results, are 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, relocations, deaths, etc.), we have 242 active volunteers today, working in 122 communities around the state. A list of all active Coverts volunteers (by County) is included in the Appendix. A yearly summary is as follows:

### Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2005

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Number of Coverts Cooperators trained	23	23	22	26	28	23	23	26	25	23	26	<b>268</b>



## **2005 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. They also offer an opportunity for our Extension staff to re-acquaint with Coverts volunteers.

### **2005 Events and Workshops**

#### **Farm and Forest Exposition – February 4-5**

Nine (9) Coverts volunteers conducted educational activities using the Wildlife Kit materials and staffed the UNH Cooperative Extension booth over the course of two days.

#### **Invasive Plants: Moving Forward – February 4**

A workshop for Coverts volunteers, other UNHCE forestry and wildlife volunteers, and members of the public interested in the ecological impacts, detection, and control of invasive plant species in New Hampshire.

#### **Coverts Advisory Committee Meeting – February 4**

Eight members of the Advisory Committee met to review projects associated with the Coverts Program including distribution of trainees, new continuing education programs, and ways to collect information from Coverts alumni.

#### **Developing Wildlife Habitat – February 17**

A new Coverts volunteer hosted an open house at a local John Deere dealership, with the theme of developing wildlife habitat. Coverts volunteers staffed a booth and discussed land stewardship and habitat management with the public.

#### **Winter Tree ID – February 17**

Coverts Cooperators invited to attend outdoor session on winter tree identification, hosted by UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Division of Forests & Lands.

#### **Wildlife Inventory & Monitoring, Lee – February 26**

Hosted by a team of Coverts Cooperators, this indoor and outdoor workshop showcased wildlife inventorying and monitoring techniques for a variety of species. It was attended by other Coverts volunteers and members of southeastern NH conservation and watershed groups.

#### **Advanced Land Conservation Workshop – March 1**

A workshop for natural resource professionals (hosted by UNH Cooperative Extension) which also included attendance by many Coverts Cooperators. Topics included

easements, estate planning, putting complex deals together, and working with local land trusts.

**Wildlife Inventory & Monitoring, Hancock – March 10**

This indoor and outdoor workshop showcased wildlife inventorying and monitoring techniques for a variety of species. It was attended by Coverts volunteers and members of southwestern NH conservation and watershed groups.

**NH Land Conservation Conference, Saving Special Places 2005 - April 16**

Attended by a large number of Coverts volunteers, this annual land conservation conference sponsored by the Center for Land Conservation Assistance and UNHCE included over 50 different workshops on land protection and resource conservation in NH.

**Bird ID and Habitat Management Tour: New Boston – April 16**

Local Coverts volunteers hosted their 23rd annual Tree Farm tour, working with UNHCE staff and the Coverts Project, which was attended by Hillsborough County Coverts Cooperators and member of the public.

**4-H Spaces Workshop – April 23**

Coverts volunteers and project staff organized and presented hands-on wildlife program for youth and parents.

**Discover Wild New Hampshire – April 30**

Staffed by Coverts volunteers and staff, the Coverts exhibit and accompanying wildlife activities were on land at this large-scale family event sponsored by NH Fish & Game.

**NH Big Tree Program Trainings - April 28 and June 12**

For the first time, Coverts volunteers were invited to participate in the NH Big Trees Program, with trainings in different parts of the state. Coverts volunteers attended both trainings.

**Exeter Alewife Festival – June 4**

Several Rockingham County Coverts volunteers organized and participated in this event. The Coverts display and wildlife kits were on hand, staffed by Coverts volunteers.

**Working Your Woodlot: Rockingham County– June 24**

Over 200 members of the public, including Coverts Cooperators, attended this all-day field workshop sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension. Coverts Cooperators staffed a booth on wildlife habitat and forest stewardship. Located in Portsmouth, NH.

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual Coverts Training Workshop: Hancock – September 7-10**

(see previous section for full description)

**Coverts Tree Farm Day: Exeter – October 1**

An 8-year veteran of the NH Coverts Project was awarded Outstanding Tree Farm of the year for 2005. This tour, co-sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, included field tours of wildlife habitat management, the Coverts display, and other forestry and habitat exhibitions. More than 15 Coverts Cooperators attended.

**Wildlife Inventory & Monitoring, Brentwood – October 15**

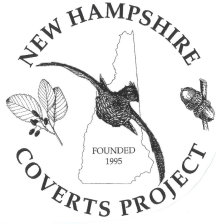
Co-sponsored by a local river conservation group, this indoor and outdoor workshop showcased wildlife inventorying and monitoring techniques for a variety of species. It was attended by Coverts volunteers and members of local planning and conservation boards in the Exeter River watershed.

**NH Outdoors Writers Collaborative – Ongoing**

An outreach opportunity for Coverts Cooperators interested in writing as part of a writer's collaborative. Writers have been submitting articles on natural resource topics for statewide media distribution of "NH Outdoors" weekly column, coordinated and edited by UNHCE.

**Coverts Listserv Forum – On-going**

Initiated in 2001, the listserv is an email-based discussion forum open to all Coverts Cooperators, project partners, and staff (145 Cooperators subscribing). It is particularly useful in rapidly announcing events, meeting, workshops, and media programs among volunteers (not just those announcements coming from the Coverts Project office).



## Summary of NH Coverts Activities in 2005

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 2005 as a compilation developed from annual surveys that Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). Coverts Cooperators also sent in over 87 written updates and articles for inclusion in our program newsletter, *Making Tracks* (see copies included in the Appendix).

Survey responses in 2005 are summarized as follows:

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> year Coverts (Class of 2004)</b>	<b>Alumni (95-2003)</b>	<b>Total Survey Responses 2005</b>
# Cooperators surveyed	23	194	217
# Cooperators returning surveys	23 (100%)	86 (44%)	109 (50%)*
Total Volunteer Hours in past 12 months  ("on behalf of forest stewardship or wildlife habitat issues")	3,140 hours  (avg. 136 hours each)	9,092 hours  (avg. 106 hours each)	12,232 hours  (avg. 112 hours each)

\*This year's 50% response rate is slightly above our average (since 1995) annual survey response rate of 47%.



### **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 veteran Coverts Cooperator writes of their property in northern NH:

*“This year, we stumped and rocked additional skid roads so that they can be maintained by bush hogging. We applied to have all our managed properties included under our Tree Farm number. Continual work to keep trails and woods roads open. We facilitated a goshawk study on our land by providing access to researchers and we continue to keep all our land open for hunting, hiking, and passive recreation in general.”*

Another Cooperator wrote:

*“As a conservation commission member, we sponsored a forestry and environmental study on a 560-acre town-owned parcel, and we did a sustainable harvest on a 10-acre parcel. I also maintained about 24 wood duck boxes”*

### **Land Stewardship Statistics:**

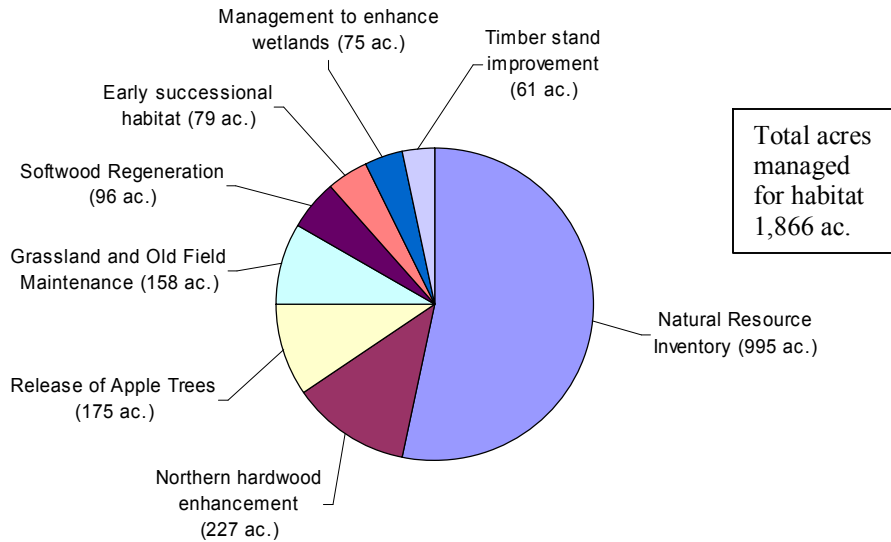
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> year Coverts (Class of 2004) Respondents</b>	<b>Alumni (95-2003) Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Total 2005 Survey Respondents</b>
Total Acres Owned	1,753	13,632	15,385
Total Acres Responsible for Managing	3,694	26,115	29,809
# Landowners Implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	15 (68%)	51 (64%)	66 (65%)

Total land owned by ALL Coverts has reached over 43,000 acres (see map on p. 2)

Total land managed by ALL Coverts has reached over 53,000 acres (see map on p. 2)

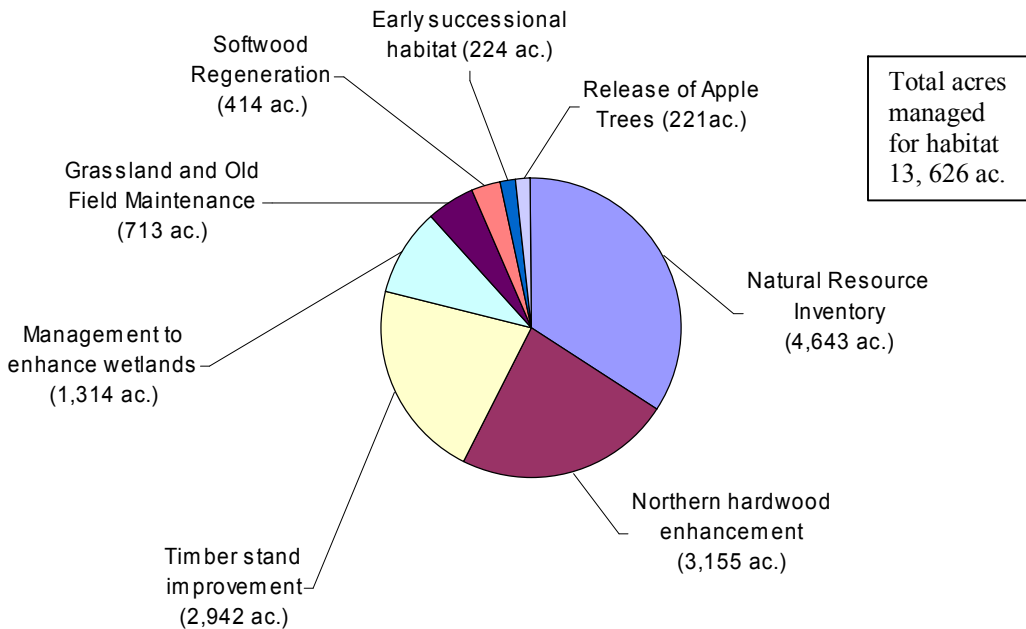
The chart below shows the habitat activities and acres of land managed by the 1<sup>st</sup> year Coverts Cooperators (2004 trainees) who responded to the survey.

**Wildlife Habitat Management by 1st year Coverts Cooperators: Acres Managed in 2005**



The chart below shows the habitat management activities and acres of land managed by the Coverts alumni (1995-2003 trainees) who responded to the survey this year.

**Wildlife Habitat Management by Coverts Alumni: Acres Managed in 2005**



## 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. A long-time Coverts Cooperator writes of progress towards conserving his land:

*“We are entering negotiations for a conservation easement on our 130-acre forest tract, and also are working with our neighbors and local conservation organizations to protect the surrounding 800 - 3000 acres. And we continue to work with regional organizations to protect a two-state mountain range.”*

### Community Conservation Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	1 <sup>st</sup> year Coverts (Class of 2004) Respondents	Alumni (95-2003) Survey Respondents	Total 2005 Survey Respondents
Serving on Conservation Commissioners	11 (50%)	34 (43%)	45 (45%)
Serving on town planning, zoning, board of selectmen, watershed, or open space board	17 (77%)	54 (68%)	71 (70%)
Helped complete a town natural resource inventory or habitat inventory	6 (27%)	28 (35%)	34 (34%)
Helped manage town or Conservation Land	8 (36%)	29 (37%)	37 (37%)
Helped in land conservation effort in 2005	7 (32%)	27 (34%)	34 (34%)
# of acres helped conserve in 2005	3,420 (avg. 150 ac. per Coverts vol.)	5,752 (avg. 67 ac. per Coverts vol.)	9,172 (avg. 84 ac. per Coverts vol.)

Click below to view a map showing the [relationship between NH towns with Coverts Cooperators and towns that have passed land conservation funding in recent years.](#)

Towns with active Coverts volunteers are almost twice as likely to have passed conservation measures as towns without Coverts volunteers.

## 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 writes:

*“For the 3rd year in a row [our] Open Space Committee has presented an Open Spaces & Nature Lecture Series (4 talks) which is always well-attended. The Conservation Commission, on which I serve, has also developed a timber harvest packet that includes applicable information for landowners to follow Best Management Practices for logging operations.”*

### Public Awareness Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	1 <sup>st</sup> year Coverts (Class of 2004) Respondents	Alumni (95-2003) Survey Respondents	Total 2005 Survey Respondents
Led field tours on their own land	6	10	16
Hosted or presented public programs in their communities	11	30	41
Involved in media interviews related to stewardship or wildlife, including newspaper articles, local TV broadcasts, or regular columns	5	25	30
Staffed natural resources exhibits	11	23	34
Held personal conversations with neighbors or friends about stewardship	19	66	85
Distributed written materials to others on wildlife or stewardship topics	9	38	47
Participate in the Tree Farm, Community Tree Stewards, Master Gardener, or Backyard Tree Farmer programs	9	31	40
Volunteer for other conservation organizations	15 (68%)	43 (54%)	58 (57%)
# of people reached with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	1,479 (avg. 64 each)	32,105 (avg. 373 each)	33,584 (avg. 308 each)



## How the Coverts Project Assists in Stewardship & Wildlife Outreach

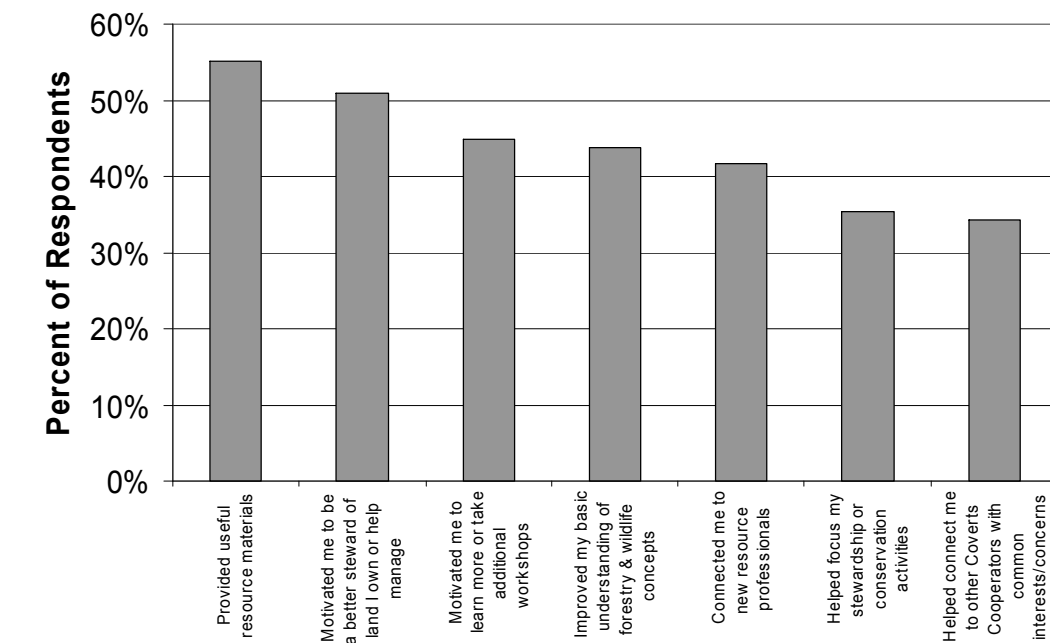
For the second time, the annual survey of Coverts Cooperators included a question asking Coverts volunteers to reflect on the Coverts Project itself. We asked volunteers how the program helped them during the past year, listing as choices the “program benefits” that derived from the results of our 2001 Coverts Program Evaluation. The question asked in this year’s survey read:

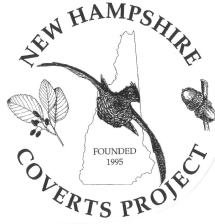
*In the past year, has the NH Coverts Project helped your stewardship or outreach activities in any of these ways? (Check all that apply).*

- Provided useful resource materials*
- Motivated me to learn more or take additional workshops*
- Helped connect me to other Coverts Cooperators with common interests/concerns*
- Improved my basic understanding of forestry & wildlife concepts*
- Connected me to new resource professionals*
- Motivated me to be a better steward of land I own or help manage*
- Helped focus my stewardship or conservation activities*
- Other (please describe):*

Results show that Coverts volunteers value different aspects of the program. All categories received significant responses, with provision of resource materials rating highest (for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row).

**How has the Coverts Project Helped Your Stewardship or Outreach Activities in 2005?**

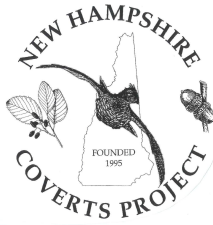




## Promoting the NH Coverts Project

The focus of the NH Coverts Project is on spreading the message of wildlife habitat conservation and sound forest stewardship to as many listeners as possible. By training volunteers who are already well-connected in their communities, the program capitalizes on the existing enthusiasm, knowledge, and energy of this relatively small group of dedicated citizens. In recent years, we have revamped the promotional materials of the NH Coverts Project to focus less on the recruitment of new volunteers (we usually have many more applications than spaces in the program) and more on the messages of habitat conservation and land stewardship. In this way, for Coverts volunteers and program staff, promotion of the program is most important as an avenue into discussion of these key messages. We use several different promotional tools, including:

- Name tags for each Cooperator to use during public presentations, events, and tours
- NH Coverts Project promotional brochure (see Appendix)
- A website describing the program in detail, including information on the annual training workshop, volunteer opportunities, profiles of Coverts volunteers, copies of the Coverts Project annual report and other reports, and information about the Coverts Advisory Committee.
- Press releases on the fall training, to recruit new volunteers, to recognize Cooperators at continuing education events, and to announce other events
- Cooperators are encouraged to contact the local media when hosting an event (and helped with drafting of press statements)
- The NH Coverts Project display and a variety of Wildlife Activity Kits are available for loan by Coverts volunteers



## Coverts Project Initiatives for 2006

**Email & Coverts Listserv** – As the number of Coverts Cooperators grows each year by roughly 25 people, mailing costs and administrative costs also rise. We have been shifting much of our correspondence with Coverts Cooperators to the internet, using email groups, the Coverts website, and an online discussion forum (listserv) to disseminate news and provide updates. The 40 volunteers without access to email continue to receive updates through the mail. For the first time, all trainees at the 2005 Coverts Workshop had email addresses.

**Webpage** – New features are added to the Coverts website continually. The page can be found in the Forestry and Wildlife section of the UNH Cooperative Extension page at: [www.extension.unh.edu](http://www.extension.unh.edu)

**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.

**Updates** – The Project Coordinator will continue yearly updates to the Ruffed Grouse Society, according to reporting guidelines issued by the Society. Other project partners also receive copies of the yearly update/annual report, which is also available on the Coverts webpage.

**Advisory Committee** – The Coverts Advisory Committee meets 1-2 times per year to discuss emerging issues and new ideas for the continued success of the program. Committee meeting notes are available on the Coverts webpage.

**Continuing Education** - In 2006, we will be offering a variety of new workshops, including a planned workshop on Farms & Wildlife.

**Annual Training Workshop** – We will continue to use Sargent Center in 2006 for the workshop training site, as it offers reliable facilities and is located near excellent field sites.

## **Appendix**

### **NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2005**

Includes:

- Program Brochure
- 2005 Coverts Application Form
- List of Active Coverts Cooperators by County
- 2005 Annual Workshop Agenda
- 2005 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form
- Summary of Results form 2005 Workshop Evaluation
- Annual Coverts Activities Survey form
- Making Tracks Newsletters
- Coverts Cooperators In The News – Example from 2005