

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2008 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 - 2008

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 2008, 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, “Annual Report Highlights: 2008” 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 2008, the program also received contributions from the Quality Deer Management Association. 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 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 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 2008 application form is included in the Appendix.

Summary of Coverts Applications – 2008

Applications sent by mail	133
Number of Applicants	43
Number Accepted for Training	29
Number Attending Training	26



Annual Coverts Training Workshop - 2008

Boston University's Sargent Center, located in Hancock, NH, continues to provide an ideal setting for the annual Coverts training workshop, held on September 3-6, 2008.

This site continues to offer reliable facilities and excellent and diverse field sites on public, private, and non-profit owned lands. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2008 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.



2008 New Coverts Volunteers Action Plan Outreach Plans

Below is list of the new 2008 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a brief description of one of the outreach ideas they are planning to execute as a Coverts volunteer in 2009:

Irene Abels (Strafford) looks forward to working on a natural resource inventory of lands along the Mohawk River in Strafford.

John Adams (Orford) wants to develop a forestry plan for his property, and bring the Coverts message of forest stewardship (and land use change) to the historical society in his town.

Judy Bailey (Chatham) plans to revisit her property's forest management plan in order to expand, refine, and focus its goals towards wildlife and habitat management.

Leslie Bergum (Carroll) would like to talk with her subdivision of neighbors to discuss commonly-owned land, which includes habitats unique to the Bretton Woods area.

Laurie Bryan (Hancock) looks forward to collaborating with her neighbors on management of their adjoining large parcels, including walking trails and habitat identification, and to put her neighbors in contact with the County Forester.

Ed Craxton (Dalton) will explore the possibility of an interpretive or educational mailing to town residents, highlighting wildlife and forestry resources for landowners.

Martha Cruciani (Francestown) hopes to guide tree regeneration on a 2-acre patch cut that was completed last winter behind her family's summer camp.

Sarah Denoncourt (Canterbury) plans to begin stewardship and forestry planning on her land, and hopes to schedule a property walk for the Five Rivers Conservation Trust in 2009.

Kristina Ferrare (Durham) looks forward to bringing information and connections made at the Coverts workshop to her job as the UNHCE's Forestry & Wildlife Outreach Assistant.

Karen Fesler (Bath) is a lecturer with her local Grange, and hopes to present a Coverts-related program for Booster Night in the coming months.

Matthew Gordon (Whitefield) is concerned about the fact of a parcel of land for sale near his property. He plans to gather neighbors together to plan positive action.

Ryan & Sarah Harvey (Wentworth) will work on developing management goals for their property, and to talk with their families about land conservation.

H. Clay Hawkins (Claremont) wants to rally 4-5 neighbors to conserve their land, hoping to create a 500-acre connection to the Cornish Town Forest.

Jim Kennedy (Hanover) plans to organize tours and workshops on his property and the neighboring Huntington Hill Management Area.

Lou LaCourse (Alton) is interested in learning more about invasive plant species, and helping to spread the word about their conservation and stewardship issues.

Alfred Levesque (Effingham) looks forward to joining the Green Mountain Conservation Group's newly-formed Land Trust Committee, so that he can be involved in the stewardship of the easements under GMCG's protection.

Louis Lieto (Rumney) wants to define the plans for habitat improvement on his own land, including expanding plans for improvement of wetlands, wet forest, meadows, softwoods, and others.

Carol Lunan (Francestown) looks forward to being a steward of her own property, including work on invasive plants, field habitats, species identification, and sharing her efforts with others.

Robert Mannino (South Hampton) hopes to offer workshops and presentations on his land, in collaboration with Extension and the Coverts Project.

Carol Meise (Bradford) will be doing outreach at town events, including the library and 4th of July, and will reach out to her family and neighbors on behalf of wildlife and forest stewardship.

David Peeler (Campton) looks forward to bringing a presentation to his town's historical society about changes in wildlife populations and land use.

John Scarinza (Randolph) plans to build and install an informational kiosk at several access points at the Randolph Town Forest, where the public can learn about forest management and wildlife habitat.

Mark Traeger (Sandown) will be incorporating wildlife considerations into his work with the Conservation Commission, educating commissioners, planning habitat improvement projects, and finding demonstration areas for landowners to visit.

Eric White (Sullivan) hopes to host a field tour at his property, to discuss past and future habitat improvement projects and to include ideas for possible cost-share projects.

Scott Young (Strafford) would like to lead nature walks on his town's newly conserved properties, sharing his enthusiasm for and knowledge of birds, dragonflies, and other wildlife and plants.



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 259 active volunteers today, working in 125 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 – 2008

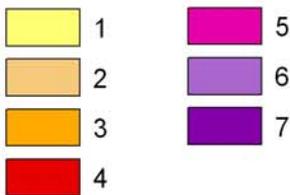
Training Year	# Coverts Trained	Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23	2002	26
1996	23	2003	25
1997	22	2004	23
1998	26	2005	26
1999	28	2006	24
2000	23	2007	23
2001	23	2008	26
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers			341
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/08			259
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/08			125

Active Coverts Cooperators 1995 - 2008

Location of Trained Volunteers
&
Acres of Land Owned or Managed

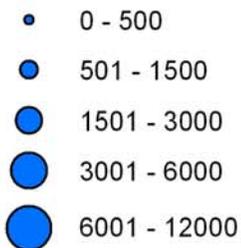
Trained Coverts Cooperators

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Coverts Land Ownership

Acres Owned or Managed, by Town



Total Owned Acres: 42,560 ac.

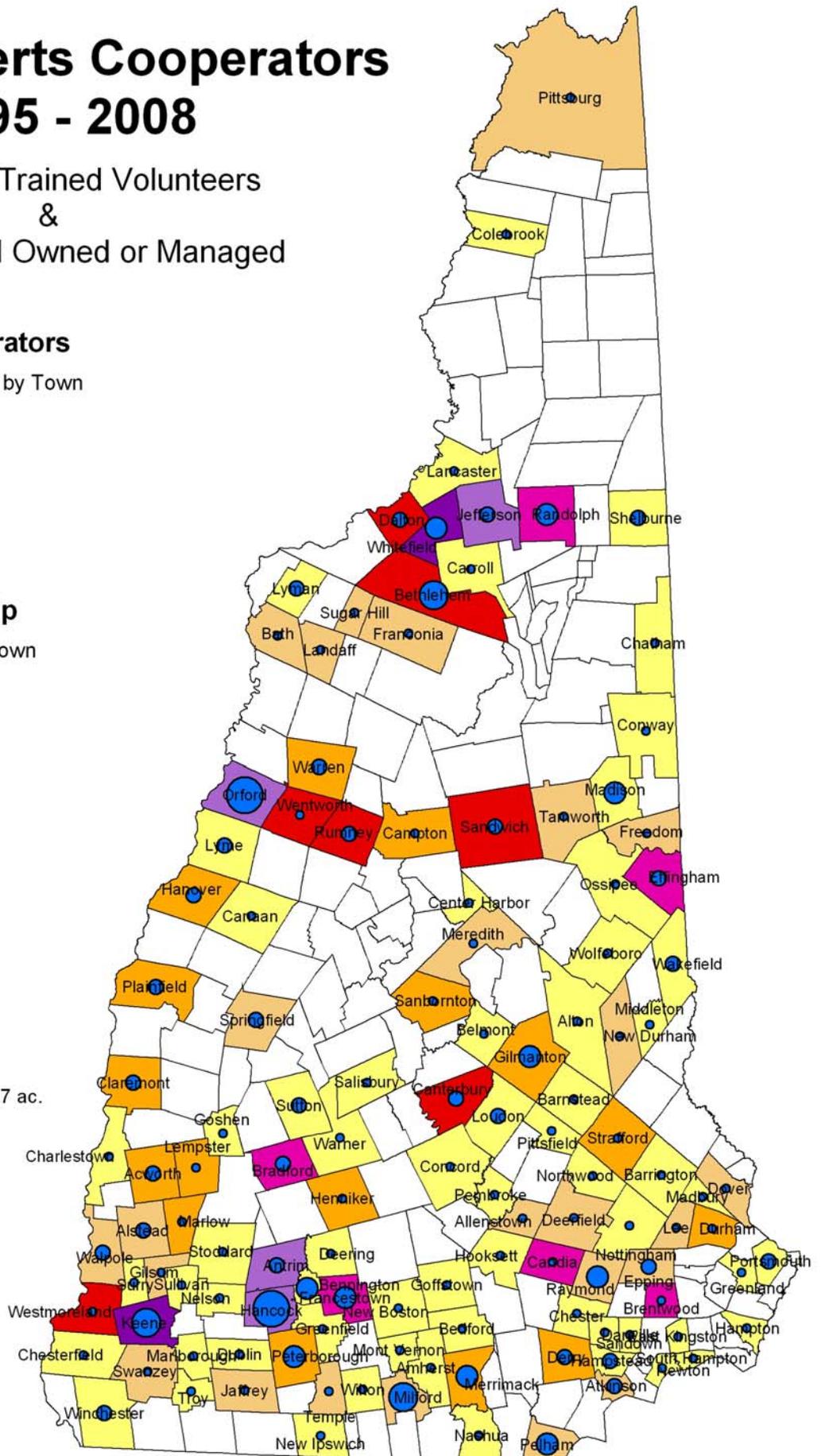
Avg. Size of Ownership: 164 ac.

Total Managed Acres: 62,647 ac.

Avg. Size of Management: 242 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship: 105,207 ac.

Due to data collection constraints, actual land stewardship locations may be located in more than one town, but are shown as being in one town (usually the town in which the owner resides).



AR_2008 Landownership Map.mxd



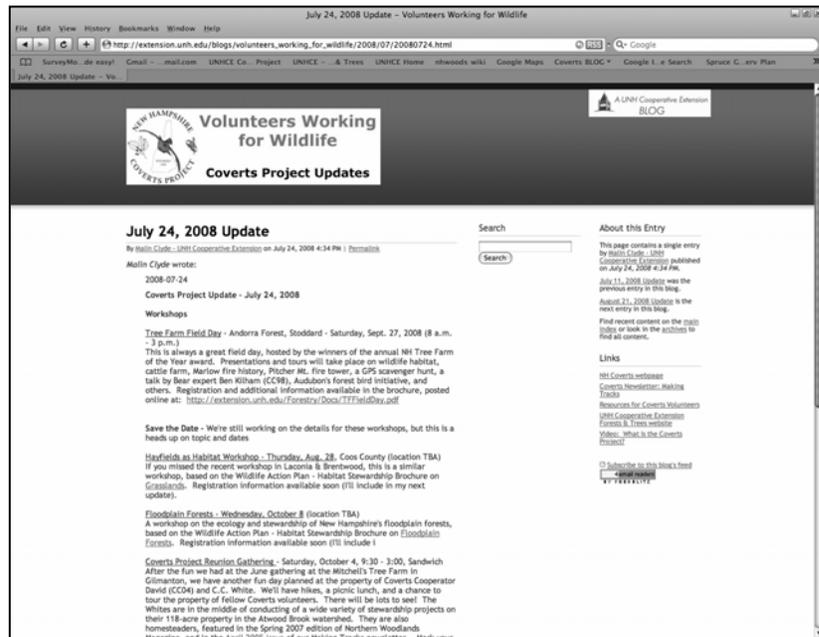
2008 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

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.

New Coverts Blog, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife” - New in 2008, the Coverts Project started a blog, hosted 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 2008

Number of Blog Posts/Updates	20
Number of Listserv Posts	76
Volunteer Opportunities Publicized	29
New Publication Alerts	27
Workshop Announcements (UNHCE-sponsored)	47
Workshop Announcements (other groups & partners)	41
Workshops designed for Coverts Volunteers (e.g. Alumni gatherings)	3
Total continuing education opportunities offered to Coverts in 2008	147



Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2008: “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 2008 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 over 26 written updates and articles for inclusion in our program newsletter, *Making Tracks* (see copies of both 2008 issues included in the Appendix).

Coverts Survey Responses in 2008 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2008 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	233
# Cooperators returning surveys	133 (57%)*
Total Volunteer Hours in past 12 months (“on behalf of forest stewardship or wildlife habitat issues”)	14,226 hours (avg. 108 hrs. per volunteer)

*average response rate since 1995 is 47%

New Opportunities to Volunteer

The Coverts blog helped facilitate many new volunteer opportunities for Coverts Cooperators. Examples of these opportunities include:

- Monitoring of New England cottontail rabbit populations (pellet surveys)
- Submission of amateur wildlife photos for publication in Habitat Stewardship Series
- “Good Forestry in the Granite State” survey
- Lamprey River Invasive Species Workday
- North Country Recreation Survey
- Biothon events at Squam Lake and Strafford
- NH Dragonfly Survey
- Presenters training for “Landscaping at the Water’s Edge”
- Rusty Blackbird field monitoring training
- Early successional habitat planting at Russell-Shea State Forest

2008 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 on Private Lands

"...Thanks to some matching money from NRCS and money...and hours of my time liming, fertilizing, and sowing, I've established a 3-acre wildlife opening on my land. I've also planted various native fruit, seed, or nut-bearing plants along the edges and in a wet shrubby area that crosses it...the field has grassed in nicely this summer. I had it mowed this September, and will only do that once a year late in the season. I planted the shrubs this spring and they all are doing well--even the browsed elderberry came back strongly. My grandkids and I found both moose and black bear tracks in the newly-cleared ground before the grass came up and made plaster casts of the best print of each!"

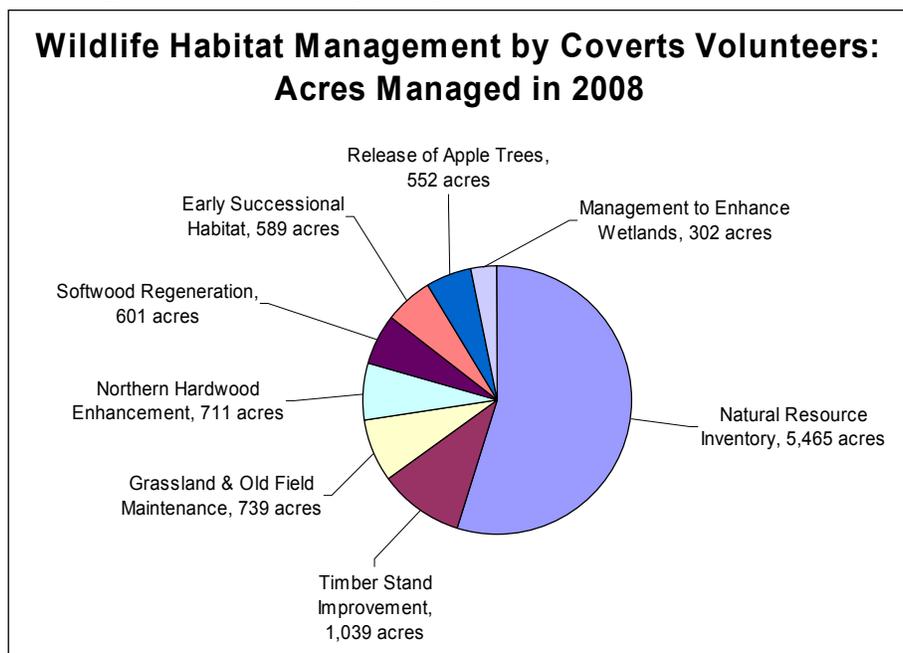
Stewardship on Public Lands

"In connection with my membership on [my town's] Forestry Committee, we have initiated new forest management plans, improved site conditions for effective harvesting and public access and conducted timber harvests on some town forestland."

Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2008 Survey Respondents
Acres Owned by survey respondents	30,623 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents)	33,976 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	88
All Coverts – Land Owned (see map, p. 6)	42,560 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed (see map, p. 6)	62.647 acres

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



2008 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:

“A major achievement [for me] this year was the closing on the purchase and permanent protection of a 175-acre forested parcel in [my town]. I was the project leader for the Conservation Commission and worked with the Sellers, [a local land trust], the Selectboard and our Town Attorney to complete the project. Of note is the fact that this project received a sizable LCHIP grant which was one of only four land protection grants by LCHIP in the year the grant was made.”

Community Conservation Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	Total 2008 Survey Respondents
Serving on Conservation Commission	49 (37%)
Serving on town planning, zoning, board of selectmen, watershed, or open space board	17
Served on open space, land trust or conservation group board	54
Helped complete a town natural resource inventory or habitat inventory	33
Helped manage town or Conservation Land	50
Involved in watershed association/river coalition or other water resources group	33
# of acres Coverts respondents helped conserve in 2008	18,270 (avg. 137 ac. per volunteer)

2008 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 worked with another Coverts Cooperator to develop a website to educate the public about our town-owned conservation lands. As a Selectman, I worked with the Conservation Commission to facilitate their approach to landowners to see if land could be acquired for conservation.”

Raising Public Awareness Statistics:

Raising Public Awareness: Practices Instigated in 2008 by Coverts Volunteers	Total 2008 Survey Respondents
Led field tours on their own land	17
Hosted or presented public programs in their communities	52
Involved in media interviews related to stewardship or wildlife, including newspaper articles, local TV broadcasts, or regular columns	49
Staffed natural resources exhibits	30
Held personal conversations with neighbors or friends about stewardship	107
Distributed written materials to others on wildlife or stewardship topics	50
Participated in the Tree Farm, Community Tree Stewards, Master Gardener, or Backyard Tree Farmer programs	67
Participated in a Natural Resource Monitoring Program, such as for Reptiles and Amphibians (RAARP), Audubon bird surveys, etc.	27
Volunteer for other conservation organizations	75
Estimate of # of people reached with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	57,817 (avg. 435 per volunteer)



Coverts Project Initiatives for 2009

Communication – We will continue to add content to and experiment with our new blog forum, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife,” which is posted through the Coverts website: NHCoverts.org. Plans for posting short video clips of management practice, and an update of the UNHCE Wildlife website will offer better web-based information for Coverts volunteers.

Improving Volunteer Opportunities – We are looking to pilot a new volunteer opportunity for Coverts volunteers interested in doing outreach about critical wildlife and habitats, as outlined in the Wildlife Action Plan. We have submitted a grant for a pilot project in the Upper Valley Region, to train Coverts volunteers to deliver materials and presentation on “Critical Wildlife Habitats” in their region and in their towns.

Continuing Education - In 2009, we will offer 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:

- Peatlands
- Lowland Spruce-Fir Forests
- Shrublands
- Appalachian-Oak Pine Forests

Annual Training Workshop – We will continue to use Sargent Center in 2009 for the workshop training site, as it offers reliable facilities and is located near excellent field sites (tentative dates are Sept. 9-12, 2009).

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: NHCoverts.org.

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 this year is a **Program Highlights** report, summarizing the 2008 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 2008

Includes:

- Program Brochure
- 2008 Program Highlights (Summary Report)
- 2008 Coverts Application Form
- 2008 Annual Workshop Agenda
- 2008 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form
- List of Active Coverts Cooperators by County
- Annual Coverts Activities Survey form - 2008
- Making Tracks Newsletters – June, Dec.
- Other supporting materials