

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2014 Annual Report

Written by:

Haley Andreozzi
Wildlife Outreach Coordinator
UNH Cooperative Extension
Durham, NH
haley.andreozzi@unh.edu
(603) 862-5327

October 31, 2014



The New Hampshire Coverts Project is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and New Hampshire Fish & Game. The program also receives support from the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Environmental Foundation, and the Quality Deer Management Association.

UNH Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status.



Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2014

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 during the last year (October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014), 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 2014” 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 Coverts Project – 2014

Project Goals

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 New Hampshire through sound land stewardship.

Funding and Staffing

Funding and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department including funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Incentive Program.

Since 2010, the program has attracted over \$36,000 in private funding from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s NH Implementation Team, the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Horticultural Fund, and the Quality Deer Management Association, along with funds from Speaking for Wildlife voluntary program contributions. In 2013, UNHCE received over \$400,000 in funds to expand the reach of the Coverts Project through The Stewardship Network: New England initiative (see p. 10). These supplemental funds helped support training, volunteer management, and outreach to Coverts volunteers in 2014.

The Coverts Project saw staffing changes in 2014. In 2013, former Coverts Project coordinator Malin Clyde took on a new role as Project Manager of The Stewardship Network: New England. This resulted in an extensive search for a newly configured position with UNHCE which would incorporate some of Malin’s previous duties, including coordination of the Coverts Project workshop. Haley Andreozzi has filled this new position (Wildlife Outreach Program Coordinator) as of February, 2014, with supervision by the UNHCE wildlife specialist (Matt Tarr).

The Coverts project continues to receive additional support by UNHCE's network of 9 county foresters and the Extension specialist in forest resources (Karen Bennett), as well as from former coordinator Malin Clyde.

Volunteer Recruitment

Each winter, the application period opens with prospective participants applying for the fall Coverts training workshop. Potential applicants are recruited by Extension staff, project partners, Coverts alumni, town decision-makers, press releases, and through events. Selection criteria include the applicant's enthusiasm for wildlife and natural resources, a willingness to commit volunteer time, and a recognized leadership role within their community. A copy of the 2014 application form is included in the Appendix.

The Training Workshop, 2014

Twenty-two new Coverts Cooperators were accepted and attended the 2014 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 7-10, 2014. The 2014 workshop marked a change from previous years, when the workshop was held in the fall. This change was made in order to better position volunteers to take action during the growing season, eliminate scheduling conflicts with the Natural Resources Steward training program that takes place in the fall, and to increase opportunities to view wildlife in the field. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2014 workshop agenda, which includes a list of instructors and field trip hosts who assisted with the 3 ½-day workshop.

The cost of the workshop, including food, lodging, transportation, and reference materials, is funded by project 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 during the following year. Each Cooperator develops an outreach plan on how they will share their experiences and motivate others in their community. Registration requires a \$50 fee to reserve a place in the workshop. This fee covers a background check completed by UNH Human Resources before applicants can be instated as UNH volunteers.

Workshop Evaluation

Upon completion of the workshop, each volunteer completes an evaluation, used to gain feedback on both the workshop as a whole and on topics, materials, and speakers during the 3 ½ day training. We also assess how their experience at the workshop changed their thinking, attitudes, or plans for future management of their land or community lands. A summary of responses to the post-workshop evaluation summarizes some of the information collected about the trainee's learning and intentions as volunteers (see box, page 4).

Evaluation Results – 2014 Coverts Workshop

- **100% of respondents were glad they attended the workshop**
- **Most (91%) gave the workshop the highest ranking for how useful it was in providing information and resources they can use in their conservation and volunteer efforts**
- **100% of respondents felt they gained an improved knowledge of wildlife & forest stewardship from participation in the workshop**
- **In response to the question, “The most important thing I learned at this workshop was...”, attendees reported the following:**
 - *Networking and learning about resources and contacts (7 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (5 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (4 people)*
 - *The importance of setting conservation objectives (3 people)*
 - *The importance of clear cuts and fields to wildlife (2 people)*
- **100% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
 - *Get more involved in my community and volunteer more*
 - *Work on managing my woodlot*
 - *Become actively involved in wildlife management and land conservation in my town*
 - *Conduct outreach focused on stewardship*
 - *Integrate wildlife habitat and timber harvesting options into conservation recommendations [in my job]*
 - *Become more active and involved in volunteering*
 - *Manage my land parcels with wildlife in mind*
 - *Change how my family manages forest land*
 - *Initiate a cut to stimulate hardwood (oak) regeneration*
 - *Work with volunteers*
 - *Network with land trust experts, conservation commission members, etc.*
 - *Get more involved with conservation outreach*
 - *Pay more attention to wildlife planning; make my land more useful to the community*
 - *Manage my own land for wildlife*
 - *Use many new resources*

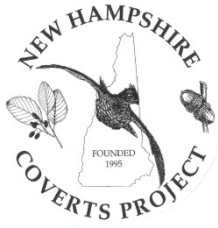


New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2014

Below is a list of the new 2014 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Larry Ames** of Frankestown hopes to collaborate with administrators at the school where he works to develop a field-based natural resources curriculum, and develop trail access and signage.
- **Maia Beh** of Marlborough looks forward to improving wildlife habitat on her property in conjunction with timber harvests.
- **Robert Brown** of New London plans to work with Cooperative Extension wildlife and forestry staff to develop a wildlife management plan for a property in his town.
- **Dan Cox** of Derry looks forward to participating in the Speaking for Wildlife program.
- **Kristin Ebbeson** of Rochester plans to join her local conservation commission or planning board.
- **Paula Hunter** of Frankestown hopes to help increase the number of outdoor activities on Frankestown Land Trust property.
- **Mimi Jost** of Strafford hopes to work on a land management plan for her 20-acre property, with a focus on creating a diversity of wildlife habitat.
- **Spencer Kellum** of Ann Arbor, MI plans to apply forest management principles to his family's land.
- **Daniel King** of Goffstown hopes to write a forest management plan for his family's conservation land, conduct a timber harvest in the next year, and invite community members for a walk on the property.
- **Scott MacLean** of Bradford plans to attend a Speaking for Wildlife training and lead walks in his community.
- **Rebecca Martin** of Bedford plans to participate in stewardship related volunteer opportunities, including a citizen science project.
- **Julia Steed Mawson** of Pelham looks forward to sharing the information she learned from Coverts with a variety of her community organizations, including her town conservation commission.
- **Alexander Metzger** of Manchester plans to incorporate information on the importance of wildlife habitat into management plans for conservation lands he helps manage.
- **Stephen Nickologianes** of Kensington looks forward to creating a trail system and map, and organizing a wildlife tour on his property.
- **Isobel Parke** of Epping plans to conduct a survey of invasive plant species on her property, and make a plan for eradication.
- **Laurence Sanders** of Harrisville looks forward to planning and implementing a mowing schedule on his property to provide grassland habitat.
- **Donna Seidel** of New Boston hopes to take the Field Walk 101 training, to become more involved in planning walks in her town.
- **Norman Spicher** of Keene looks forward to using new knowledge to increase his efficacy as a land steward.
- **Goody Valentine** of Dover plans to develop a management plan to improve existing habitat on her property.
- **Bob Welsh** of Deering plans to develop a presentation focused on wildlife and climate change to promote wildlife conservation in his community.
- **Christopher Young** of Conway plans to manage his property to benefit wildlife.
- **David Weir** of Peterborough plans to help implement conservation strategies for a several thousand acre forest in his community, which includes some of his own property.





Active Coverts Cooperators

Cooperators become part of a volunteer network connected through the internet, field tours, and continuing education workshops. After some attrition (due to dropouts, re-locations, deaths, etc.), we have 369 active volunteers today, working in over 150 different communities around the state (see map, page 7). A list of all active volunteers is available from Project staff (but is excluded from this report, due to space constraints). A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2014

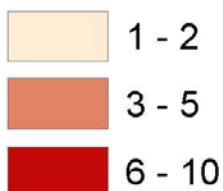
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
2010	24
2011	25
2012	22
2013	21
2014	22
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	478
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/14	369
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/13	150+

Active NH Coverts Project Volunteers 1995-2014

Location of Volunteers

of Coverts Volunteers

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town

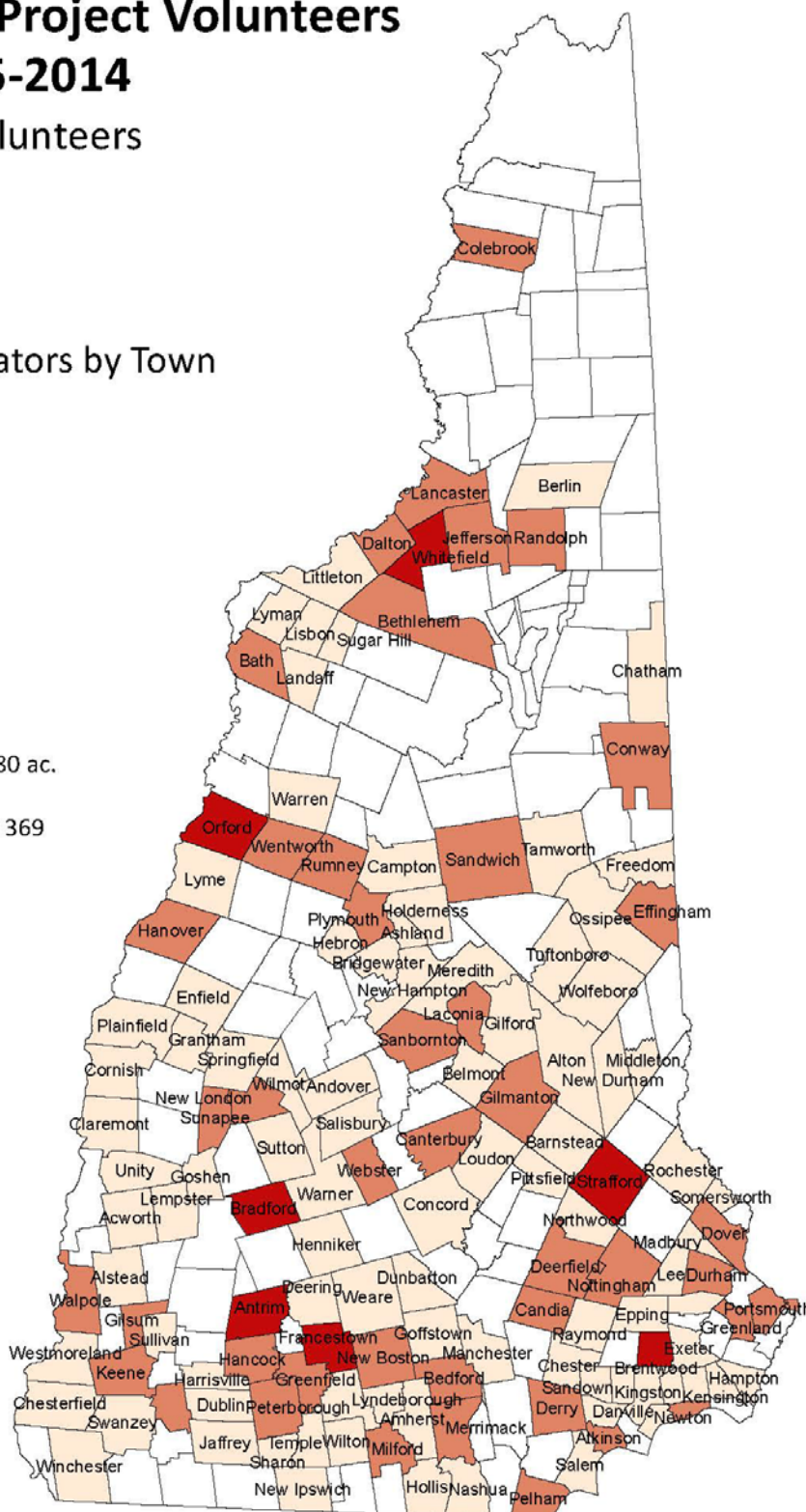


Total Owned Acres: 56,024 ac.

Total Managed Acres: 72,756 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship (2014): 128,780 ac.

Total # Active Coverts Volunteers (2014): 369



Prepared by Haley Andreozzi
UNH Cooperative Extension
October 2014



2014 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

The Coverts Project connects Coverts Cooperators to many events, workshops, news and new volunteer opportunities 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 activities 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” –

This web-based forum has become the main communication tool aimed at Coverts volunteers, and its contents are included on the Coverts webpage in a sidebar. Blog postings are also sent directly to Coverts Cooperators through email updates. To date in 2014, the Coverts Project office has posted **52 different news items**. A sample page is shown to the right. The address for the blog is: <http://extension.unh.edu/Article-Categories/Coverts>

NH Coverts Facebook Group – created in 2013, the Coverts Project created a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 46 members. Many are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (677 followers), but the project-specific group allows for Coverts volunteers to post their own pictures, updates, and stories, and allows staff to offer targeted updates.



October 2014 Alumni Gathering – On October 4th, 2014 over 35 Coverts Cooperators and UNH Cooperative Extension staff members gathered at the NH School of Falconry for NH Coverts Project alumni event. Founded in 2005, the school is owned and operated by Coverts Cooperator Nancy Cowan and her husband, Jim. The school offers a variety of classes led by Cowan, a licensed Master Falconer. A long-term conservation advocate, Nancy Cowan attended the Coverts Project training workshop in 1998, and has been an active, involved member of the Coverts volunteer community. Attendees were introduced to the school, the history and art of falconry, and were given the opportunity to fly a falcon. Extension Forestry Specialist Karen Bennett and Wildlife Specialist Matt Tarr led an informative walk through the property to explore areas that were recently managed in a timber harvest the previous winter; discussion topics included invasive plants, deer browse, oak regeneration, and more.



Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2014: “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 2014 based on the results from our **annual survey**, which Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). We received surveys from 41% of active Coverts volunteers in 2014, a lower response rate than the 50% goal, but still offering a strong picture of active volunteerism on the part of Coverts volunteers.

Coverts Survey Responses in 2014 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2014 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	350
# Cooperators returning surveys	143 (41%)

Summary of Coverts Cooperators Volunteer Activities (listed in order by amount of volunteer time)

Volunteer Activity	No. of Hours
Time spent working to conserve my own land	4979
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	4699
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	2332
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	2194
Time spent helping manage town forest or other conservation land (e.g. town forest, land trust land, neighbors)	1962
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1659
Serving on a conservation commission	1611
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	1171
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	877
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	825
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	663
Volunteered for a wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	615
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	481
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	467
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	204
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	160
Other	701
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2013	25,600

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2014 was **25,600 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 41% of active volunteers who returned surveys.

Special 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 continued to support a special volunteer project called “**Speaking for Wildlife.**” This project was initiated in September 2010, and has been supported by four different grants from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Wellborn Ecology Fund, and the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Environmental Horticultural Fund.

We have a group of 145 volunteers trained to lead walks and deliver wildlife-focused presentations all over the state. A brochure about the program is provided in the Appendix. Details about the program can be found on the web at SpeakingForWildlife.org. Accomplishments of the program in 2014 include:

- Held 2 training workshop involving 23 new volunteers
- Held a special training workshop for the Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Corps, involving 30 young adult volunteers
- Completed development of a new presentation, “NH Bugs: The Big Three” focusing on three of the non-native insects that are threatening New Hampshire’s forests
- Volunteers delivered 46 public presentations reaching 760 people
- Volunteers led 14 public field walks with 97 participants

The Stewardship Network: New England

In 2013, Coverts Project staff received over \$400,000 in grant funds from the US Forest Service and the National Science Foundation for an initiative called “The Stewardship Network: New England.” The aim of the project is to mobilize volunteers to care for and study lands and waters, and to work with a wide range of partners to better match needed stewardship and citizen science work with people who are willing to help. This widens the reach of the NH Coverts Project, and expands volunteer and training opportunities for Coverts volunteers.

Since it’s official launch in April 2014, The Stewardship Network: New England has connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 70 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire. The 45+ editions of the Network’s weekly e-bulletin have promoted over 150 stewardship and citizen science projects to a growing network of 1,300+ interested volunteers and professionals. Over 4,600 volunteer hours have been contributed towards environmental stewardship, training, or citizen science projects. The Stewardship Network: New England staff has also provided technical assistance to scientists and conservation organizations on how to work with volunteers, and developed a web-based registration system that enables partner organizations to easily recruit and communicate with new volunteers. The project’s website can be found at <http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org>.



Land Stewardship

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

"I continue to work on my stewardship plan on my land. I work to create habitat for wildlife by clearing areas to create early successional habitat; I have planted high bush cranberry, raspberry and grapes. [...] The experience and knowledge I received from the Coverts program has been a great help in understanding the balance that needs to be held in woodlands."

Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2014 Survey Respondents
Acres Owned by survey respondents	20,483 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	57,732 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	87 (61% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	56,024
All Coverts – Land Managed	72,756 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2014 (who responded to the 2014 survey).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2014 (# acres managed, by habitat type)

Resource Inventory	1,901 ac.
Timber Stand Improvement	491 ac.
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	888 ac.
Hardwood Management	276 ac.
Wetland Enhancement	330 ac.
Early Successional Management	295 ac.
Softwood Management	348 ac.



Community Conservation

Many Coverts Cooperators serve as local decision-makers and help initiate or implement conservation and stewardship projects in their communities. One volunteer describes his role in local land stewardship:

"As Conservation Commission chair, I am working on a number of land acquisitions as well as serving on committees of [the local land trust]. I'm also working with the county forester, NHFG, and UNH Extension staff to develop a forestry and wildlife management plan for one of our 160 acre town conservation lands. Much of this work was motivated by training and exposure to the NH Coverts program."

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2014	11,508 acres
--	---------------------



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 reported a highlight from this past year:

"The Speaking for Wildlife [A Garden for Wildlife: Natural Landscaping for a Better Backyard] presentation for the New London Garden Club with 68 attendees was a highlight. An engaged and curious audience made all the difference! Judging from the comments, quite a few went away with a greater appreciation for wildlife habitat. Given that these folks have their hands in the dirt by choice and want to sustain ecosystems, it was time and energy well spent."

Coverts volunteer participation in the *Speaking for Wildlife* program is, along with other types of outreach, an important avenue for raising public awareness (see outcomes, page 10)

Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2014 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, Speaking for Wildlife, etc.	20,121 people
--	----------------------



Coverts Project Initiatives for 2015

Communication – Continue the use of the Volunteers Working for Wildlife Blog to focus on stories about Coverts volunteer activities and stories, and use of Stewardship Network: New England e-news bulletins to promote volunteer opportunities and training news. Continue social media work with the Forestry & Wildlife Facebook page, the NH Coverts Facebook Group, Taking Action for Wildlife website (a collaboration with NH Fish & Game), and Speaking for Wildlife website.

Improving Volunteer Opportunities – Offer continued trainings for Speaking for Wildlife, including a Field Trip 101 training in partnership with The Forest Society (SPNHF) in December 2014. We will continue to expand opportunities for citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities through the Stewardship Network: New England's online hub and e-news bulletins.

Annual Training Workshop – The Coverts workshop will continue to be held in the spring for 2015. The training will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 6-9, 2015.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Project Advisory Committee will meet in early 2015, with four new members from the most recent 2014 class added to the roster of advisors.

Coverts Gatherings – The Coverts Project will organize 1-2 field days at Coverts volunteer-owned properties.

Updates – Haley Andreozzi began as the new UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Coordinator in February 2014. She serves as Coordinator of the NH Coverts Project, as well as running the Speaking for Wildlife program, serving on the Taking Action for Wildlife team, The Stewardship Network: New England team, and the New England Cottontail Outreach Working Group. Former Coordinator Malin Clyde will continue to be involved in the NH Coverts Project through her assistance at the training workshop, as well as her role as Project Coordinator of The Stewardship Network: New England. The Network will continue to help connect Coverts volunteers (post-workshop) to meaningful, varied, and well-organized volunteer projects that improve wildlife habitat and environmental conservation in New Hampshire.

In consultation with project staff and presenters, we will continue to hold the workshop on a spring schedule. Holding the workshop in the spring allowed for the incorporation of new and valuable content, including an early morning bird walk, a visit to a vernal pool, and many wildlife sightings. Additionally, the spring schedule allowed newly trained Coverts Cooperators to take immediate actions following the workshop, including coordination of an invasive plant workday, holding a field walk on their property, and participation in the summer Speaking for Wildlife training.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2014

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2014 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2014 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2014 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2014 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2014](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)