



New Hampshire Coverts Project *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*

2017 Annual Report



Written by:

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

October 31, 2017

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.

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. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture, NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands, NH Fish and Game, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and N.H. counties cooperating.



Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2017

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, 2016 – September 30, 2017), 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 2017” 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 – 2017

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, with additional support from the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands.

Since 2010, the program has attracted additional 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. Since 2013, UNHCE has received over \$800,000 in funds to expand the reach of the Coverts Project through The Stewardship Network: New England initiative (see p. 10). These supplemental funds help support training, volunteer management, and outreach to Coverts volunteers.

Haley Andreozzi, the UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Coordinator, coordinates the Coverts Project. The Coverts project continues to receive additional support from UNHCE’s network of 9 County Foresters, Extension Wildlife Specialist Matt Tarr, Extension Specialist in Forest Resources Karen Bennett, Land & Water Conservation Field Specialist Emma Tutein, and Community Volunteer Development Specialist Malin Clyde.

Volunteer Recruitment

Each January, the application period opens with prospective participants applying for the spring 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 2017 application form is included in the Appendix.

Training Workshop, 2017

Twenty-four new Coverts Cooperators from 21 different communities were accepted and attended the 2017 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 3-6, 2017. Volunteers received comprehensive training in wildlife conservation, forest stewardship, habitat management, land conservation principles, and effective outreach from a variety of natural resource professionals. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2017 workshop agenda, which contains a list of instructors and field trip hosts who assisted with the 3 ½-day workshop.

Project partners fund the cost of the workshop, including food, lodging, transportation, and reference materials. 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 enrolled 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 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 trainees' learning and intentions as volunteers (see page 4).

Evaluation Results: 2017 Coverts Workshop

- **100% of respondents were glad they attended the workshop**
- **All participants (100%) gave the workshop the highest rankings for how useful it was in providing information and resources they can use in their conservation and volunteer efforts**
- **94% 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 (8 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (8 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (5 people)*
 - *The importance of young forest to wildlife (3 people)*
- **100% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
 - *Manage shrublands on our land*
 - *Utilize services of the Extension County Forester*
 - *Volunteer more*
 - *Lead field trips with information about wildlife*
 - *Organize habitat management workshops on town forests*
 - *Update management plan to include early successional habitat*
 - *Increase community involvement*
 - *Coordinate with my neighbors*
 - *Develop a management plan for my property*
 - *Join the conservation commission*

New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2017

Below is a list of the new 2017 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Michael Bara** of New Ipswich plans to speak with his neighboring landowners to share what he has done on his land, and hopes to develop soft edge habitat on his property.
- **Marghi Bean** of Kingston will continue to serve on her conservation commission and hopes to engage more volunteers in town through her outreach.
- **Edward Boyle** of New Boston plans to join his town’s conservation commission.
- **David Brazier** of New London wants to learn more about the protection and management of conservation land that abuts his property, and have the County Forester visit the two properties at the same time.

- **David Butler** of Bedford plans to write an article on red pines for his local land trust's newsletter, using Extension staff as a resource for information.
- **Elizabeth Chadwick** of Ossipee plans to reach out to her local library to discuss wildlife programming.
- **Thomas Coleman** of Greenland plans to work with his County Forester to use his tree farm as a demonstration area for educational workshops.
- **Derek Colquhoun** of Laconia wants to volunteer with the Squam Lakes Science Center as a docent.
- **Judith Crosley** of Wolfeboro wants to join the Speaking for Wildlife volunteer program to give wildlife-themed presentations to local groups.
- **Carl Crosley** of Wolfeboro plans to develop and implement a land management plan for the properties owned by his local watershed association.
- **Kathleen Doherty** of Concord wants to incorporate wildlife habitat needs into a new trail design on a property owned by the land trust where she works.
- **Courtney Dragiff** of Norwich wants to work with her land trust's stewardship committee and her town's conservation commission to identify the best strategies for invasive plant management.
- **Thomas Gardner** of Middleton plans to deliver educational programs about wildlife to local schools, libraries, and land trusts.
- **Dennis Garnham** of Raymond would like to give talks to local organizations to raise awareness of the value of protecting nature.
- **Kirsten Glass** of Lyme plans to turn her property into a local stewardship demonstration area.
- **Christina Keim** of Rochester wants to integrate habitat management principles into the management of her horse farm, to combine good farm management with wildlife conservation principles.
- **Lorrie O'Connor** of Raymond plans to work to develop a wildlife and stewardship plan for the local elementary school.
- **Rebecca Steeves** of Campton wants to work to update the kiosk, enhance the trail guide, and develop a scavenger hunt for youth on a town-owned property.
- **Michael Thiel** of Rye wants to develop a management plan for his property and create patch cuts.
- **Barry Tiedt** of Bedford is planning to meet with Extension field staff to help incorporate trails and wildlife habitat into a forest management plan for his property.
- **David Viale** of Exeter plans to organize tours for landowners on conserved properties.
- **Matthew Watson** of Eaton wants to meet his neighboring landowners to discuss their goals and potential shared management interests.
- **Russel Wilder** of Alton Bay plans to work to help conserve land around the local high school to serve as an outdoor classroom.
- **Jillian Winmill** of Sandown will continue to serve on her conservation commission and wants to work to expand their activities by working with schools, organizing volunteer opportunities, and managing habitat.
- **Sally Waterhouse** of North Woodstock wants to work with her County Forester & the UNHCE Wildlife Specialist to improve wildlife habitat on her 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, relocations, deaths, etc.), we have 421 active volunteers today, working in over 175 different communities around the state (see map, page 7). A list of all active volunteers is available from Project staff. A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2017

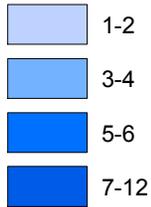
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
2010	24
2011	25
2012	22
2013	21
2014	22
2015	23
2016	22
2017	24
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	547
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/17	421
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/17	175+

Location of Active Volunteers

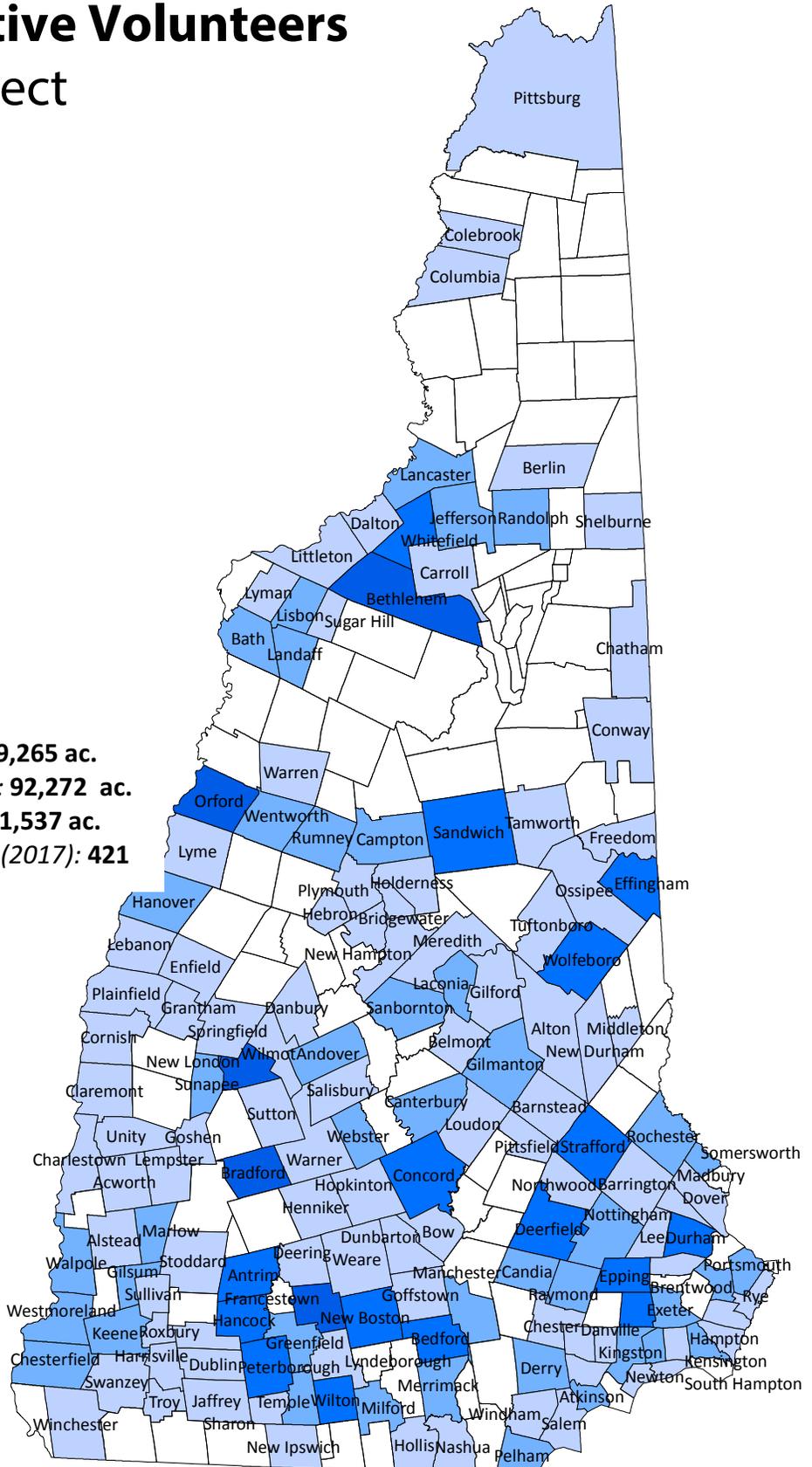
NH Coverts Project

1995-2017

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Acres Owned by Volunteers: **59,265 ac.**
 Acres Managed by Volunteers: **92,272 ac.**
 Total Acres in Stewardship: **151,537 ac.**
 Total No. of Active Volunteers (2017): **421**



2017 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 resources programs, thereby broadening our training audience and offering more continuing education opportunities to all of our natural resource volunteers.

Coverts Updates – These e-mail newsletters are the main communication tool between the project office and Coverts Cooperators. In 2017, 22 Updates were sent to Coverts volunteers, containing information on volunteer opportunities, workshops and trainings, relevant news, resources, and updates related to the NH Coverts Project.

Coverts Blog, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife” – This web-based forum has become integral in providing information specific to 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. In 2017, the Coverts Project office has posted 20 different news items. During this year, there were 1,563 unique visits to Coverts Blog articles. 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 –The Coverts Project moderates a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 70 members. Many are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (2,003 followers), but the project-specific group allows for Coverts volunteers to post their own pictures, updates, and stories, and allows staff to offer targeted information and resources.

Coverts Wildlife Tracking Workshop – Twenty Coverts Cooperators and project staff gathered on February 25, 2017 for a wildlife tracking workshop at the Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock, NH. The workshop was offered exclusively to NH Coverts Project volunteers, and was guided by certified wildlife trackers with White Pine Programs. Participants received instruction on how to identify and use wildlife sign to interpret wildlife behavior and habitat use on properties that the own or steward.

Coverts Nature Journaling Workshop – Sixteen Coverts Cooperators and project staff gathered on September 21, 2017 for a Nature Journaling workshop at Massabesic Audubon Center in Auburn, NH. The workshop was led by instructor Clare Walker Leslie, author of many books on the art of nature journaling. Participants received instruction on how to use nature journaling as a tool to help document natural resource and wildlife observations on properties they own or manage.

Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2017: *Working for Wildlife*

Coverts Cooperators are selected to participate in the program based on their commitment and enthusiasm for wildlife conservation and forest stewardship. 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 2017 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 32% of active Coverts volunteers, well above what is considered an acceptable survey response rate and offering a strong picture of active volunteerism on the part of Coverts volunteers.

Coverts Survey Responses in 2017 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2017 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	411
# Cooperators returning surveys	131 (32%)

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

Volunteer Activity	No. of Hours
Time spent working to manage my own land for wildlife habitat	4439
Time spent helping manage or steward town forest or other conservation land (e.g. management planning, volunteer workdays, trail work, invasive plant control, planting natives, etc.)	2916
Serving on a conservation commission	1764
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	1585
Time spent working to conserve my own land	1529
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1368
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	1006
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	987
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	941
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	798
Volunteered for a citizen science or wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	618
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	596
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	575
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	420
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	292.5
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	241
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	215
Other Hours	1624
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2017	21,915

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2017 was **21,915 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 32% of active volunteers who returned surveys.

Special Opportunities to Volunteer

Speaking for Wildlife Project

Coverts Updates and blog posts help facilitate many new volunteer opportunities for Coverts Cooperators. Along with notices about volunteering for other conservation groups and trainings for volunteers, the Coverts Project also continues to support a special volunteer project called “**Speaking for Wildlife.**” This project started in September 2010, and has been supported by grants from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Wellborn Ecology Fund, and the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Environmental Horticultural Fund. Currently, the project is supported in part by funds from the NH Fish and Game Department.

We have a group of 199 volunteers trained to deliver wildlife-focused presentations and lead field walks 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 2017 include:

- Held 3 training workshops involving 43 volunteers
- Developed a new presentation - *Reptiles & Amphibians: Warming Up to NH's Cold-blooded Natives* - that highlights the 40 species of frogs, snakes, turtles, and salamanders that are native the New Hampshire. The presentation discusses habitat needs, ecology, interesting facts, threats to the species, and conservation actions.
- Volunteers delivered 31 public presentations reaching 638 people
- Volunteers led 20 public field walks with 180 participants

The Stewardship Network: New England

The Stewardship Network: New England (Network), a project of UNH Cooperative Extension, aims 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. Malin Clyde, former coordinator of the NH Coverts Project, is project manager for the Network, and both current Coverts coordinator Haley Andreozzi and project staff Emma Tutein work on the Network team.

Since 2014, The Stewardship Network: New England has connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 196 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire. The Network’s weekly e-bulletin and online calendar has promoted 893 stewardship projects and workdays and 56 ongoing citizen science opportunities to a growing network of 2,428 interested volunteers and professionals, including all active Coverts Cooperators. Network staff also provide technical assistance to researchers and conservation organizations on how to work with volunteers, and implements a web-based registration system that enables partner organizations to easily recruit and communicate with new volunteers. The Stewardship Network: New England has also developed and released six training guides offering instruction materials for training

volunteers in stewardship and educational activities, increasing the collective capacity to care for and study our lands and waters. Training guide topics include leading nature walks, monitoring conservation easements, basic trail maintenance, outdoor skills, organizing a volunteer workday, and invasive plants. The project’s website can be found at 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’ve spent the last 4 months developing a forest management plan for our 34 acres [in Eaton]. Together with the knowledge I gained at the [NH Coverts Project workshop] as well as help from a variety of foresters, we have set up a plan to stagger our forestry and begin encouraging different-aged patches. Additionally, I’ve been able to help shed light on neighbors properties as they try to make decisions about cutting/ clearing and managing sections of their own forests.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

Acres Owned by survey respondents	16,585 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	71,767 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	72 (56% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	59,265 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	92,272 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2017 (survey respondents only).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2017 (# acres managed, by habitat type)	
Resource Inventory	3582 acres
Hardwood Management	2596 acres
Wetland Enhancement	980 acres
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	860 acres
Timber Stand Improvement	586 acres
Early Successional Management	365 acres
Softwood Management	271 acres

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 her role in local land conservation:

“As a member of the Conservation Commission, I was able to participate in the completion of a three year land acquisition project which permanently conserves 580 acres [...] and connects the land to a larger body of conserved land. This land will be open for recreational, agricultural and educational opportunities and will continue to provide vital habitat for many species of wildlife and flora.”

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2017	4,794 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:

“Last year I drew up a management plan for my land, a 17 acre parcel that had been degraded by invasive plants and lack of management. I worked with Extension staff to develop this plan, and over the last year have put it into place. It involved removal of invasives from a large area, and converting a very large area of grass lawn (~1 acre) to meadow. [...] I have been describing the work I do on my property to my neighbors and friends in Durham and beyond, and then talking to them about their properties and what they might do to make their properties more inviting to wildlife. [...] My friends come and see my property, and we talk about the big changes they can see, and the amazing variety of wildlife I see on my property. I am hopeful that I am planting seeds that will flourish, and ideas that will spread.”

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

Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2017 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, Speaking for Wildlife, etc.	12,344 people
--	----------------------

NH Coverts Project Initiatives for 2018

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 and website 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 and Field Trip 101 training in 2018. We will continue to expand access to citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities and training through the Stewardship Network: New England's online hub, e-newsletter, and social media.

Annual Training Workshop – The 2018 NH Coverts Project Annual Training Workshop will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 2-5, 2018. Holding the workshop in the spring allows for the incorporation of valuable seasonal content and provides the opportunity for newly trained Coverts Cooperators to take immediate action following the workshop.

Continuing Education for Cooperators – Project staff will continue to organize continuing education opportunities tailored to the needs and interests of Coverts Cooperators, including topics like wildlife tracking, forest management, naturalist skills, and more. Project staff will also continue to assist in the planning of field days for Coverts volunteers at Coverts-owned properties or other places of interest, as requested.

Updates – The Project Coordinator will continue yearly updates to all project partners. The report is promoted and made available to Coverts Cooperators on the Coverts webpage, *nhcoverts.org*. Also available on the website is a Highlights Report, summarizing the 2017 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2017

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2017 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2017 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2017 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2017 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2017](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)