



New Hampshire Coverts Project *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*

2018 Annual Report



Written by:

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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.

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Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2018

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, 2017 – September 30, 2018), 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 2018” 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, NH Fish and Game, and other partners.

The Coverts Project

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.

In the past, 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 voluntary program contributions. Since 2013, UNHCE has received over \$800,000 in funds to expand the reach of the Coverts Project through the Nature Groupie project (formerly The Stewardship Network: New England; see p. 10). This project helps support training, volunteer management, and outreach to Coverts volunteers.

Haley Andreozzi, the UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Program Manager, coordinates the NH 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 including County Foresters, project partners, Coverts alumni, town decision-makers, press releases, and events

throughout the calendar year. 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 2018 application form is included in the Appendix.

Training Workshop, 2018

Twenty-two new Coverts Cooperators from 21 different communities were accepted and attended the 2018 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 2-5, 2018. 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 2018 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 as stewards of New Hampshire's wildlife and forest resources during the following year. Each Cooperator develops an outreach plan for how they intend to 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: 2018 Coverts Workshop

- **100%** of respondents were **glad they attended** the workshop
- **91%** of participants gave the workshop the **highest ranking for how useful it was in providing information they can use** in their conservation and volunteer efforts
- **95%** of participants 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:
 - *Good forestry practices can benefit wildlife (6 people)*
 - *The importance of young forest to wildlife (5 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (5 people)*
 - *Networking and learning about resources and contacts (5 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (4 people)*
- **100%** of respondents reported they **would do something differently** as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:
 - *Manage town forests for wildlife*
 - *Incorporate buffers and more management activities on my land*
 - *Reach out to more people in town to better steward conservation land*
 - *Being more open-minded about forestry practices*
 - *More community involvement*
 - *Integrate woodlands/wildlife management*
 - *Create a management plan for my forest*
 - *Participate in the Speaking for wildlife program*
- **73%** of respondents reported they **had not previously developed a land management plan, but intend to** after the workshop

New Coverts Volunteers: **Action Plans for 2018**

Below is a list of the new 2018 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Edward Damon** of Concord plans to implement a timber harvest on his Tamworth woodlot with wildlife objectives in mind.
- **Tom Dufresne** of Hollis will lead three walks this summer for local residents on town-owned properties.
- **Michael George** of Jaffrey hopes to organize a series of walks with local landowners focused on wildlife and habitats.
- **Randy Gibson** of Nashua plans to incorporate ideas and information from the Coverts training into the annual outdoor recreation program for youth that he helps coordinate.
- **Judi Hall** of Rumney wants to participate in Speaking for Wildlife, and also plans to integrate natural landscaping into her backyard.
- **Kris Holleran** of Raymond plans to participate in the Speaking for Wildlife program and talk with others about land management.
- **Mary Ann Krebs** of Durham wants to join her town's Conservation Commission, and get involved in Speaking for Wildlife.
- **Myrtle Lewis** of Thornton wants to activate the Thornton Conservation Commission.
- **Erin Mastine** of Gilford is planning to join the Belknap County Conservation District to assist them with communication and outreach efforts.
- **Sue Mayotte** of Newfields wants to continue to help Southeast Land Trust with their events, eventually leading nature walks on the properties.
- **Stacy Mazur** of Newmarket is planning to host shoreline cleanups at Great Bay wildlife refuge.
- **Holly Hanford Oliver** of Windham wants to involve a consulting forester and organize an event for the public at Windham Town Forest.
- **Scott Orzechowski** of Somersworth wants to survey for and document species of concern in his city.
- **Michael Petrun** of Concord hopes to develop a management plan for Buffalo Park, in partnership with the conservation commission, and incorporate the effort into the curriculum for his students.
- **Kevin Pobst** of Franconia plans to volunteer for Project Nighthawk with NH Audubon and the Harris Center.
- **Erroll Rhodes** of Deerfield wants to continue to steward his land, including mapping efforts, forest management for wildlife, and sharing the site for education.
- **Barbara Richter** of Keene plans to volunteer with local schools to engage children in outdoor education.
- **Leonard Sarapas** of Hampstead will use the information and resources from Coverts in his work as a SPNHF land steward and in helping to control invasive plants at the Lubberland Creek Preserve.
- **Edie Shipley** of Brentwood hopes to map and inventory her forestland, and pursue developing a management plan.
- **Lou Springer** of Mount Vernon wants to reach out to the local school to offer to lead a forestry/wildlife walk, and plans to also look into Project Learning Tree.
- **Jim Whitlock** of Sandown plans to become an easement monitor for his local land trust.
- **Kate Wilcox** of Barrington wants to take photographs for various organizations for use in outreach related to wildlife.



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 436 active volunteers today, working in over 155 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:

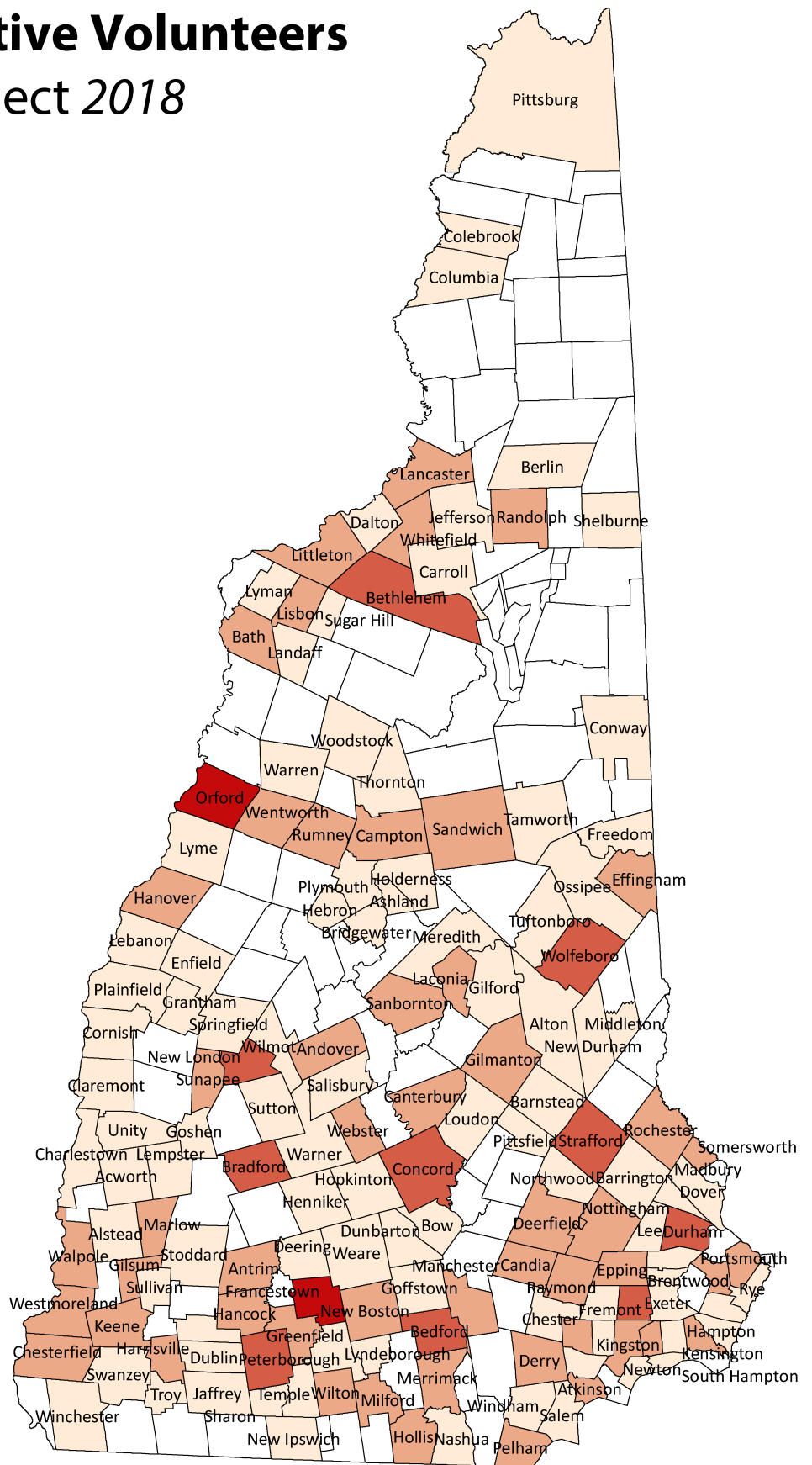
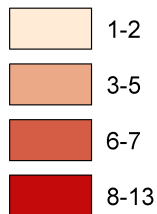
Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2018

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
2018	22
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	569
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/18	436
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/18	155+

Location of Active Volunteers

NH Coverts Project 2018

Number of Coverts
Cooperators by Town



Coverts Outreach and Communication

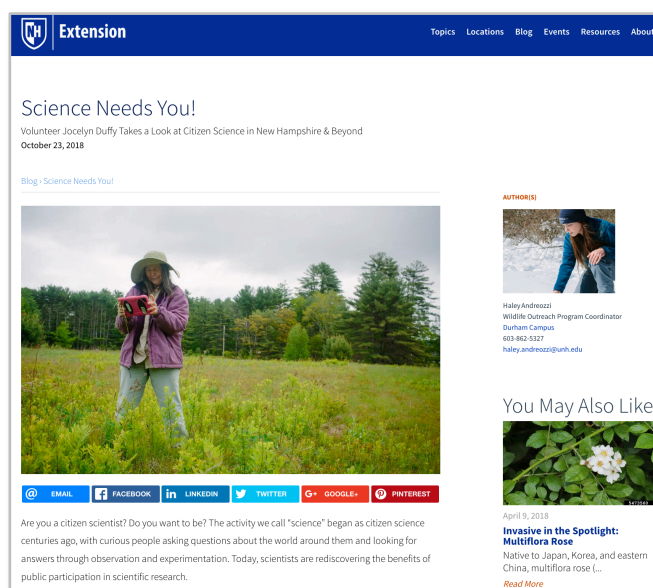
The Coverts Project connects Coverts Cooperators to events, workshops, news, and new volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Through these activities, they build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training 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 resources volunteers.

Coverts Updates – These e-mail newsletters are the main communication tool between the project office and Coverts Cooperators. In 2018, 19 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 – This web-based forum has become integral in providing information and resources for Coverts volunteers, and its contents are included on the Coverts webpage in a menu at the bottom of the page. A sample blog page is shown to the right.

New Project Website – In 2018, UNH Cooperative Extension designed and launched a new website, which involved a redesign and reorganization of the NH Coverts Project website. The new site structure makes it easier for NH Coverts volunteers to identify and access resources, news, and events that might be of interest to them. It also streamlines information for individuals who are interested in learning more about and potentially participating in the Coverts Project.

NH Coverts Facebook Group – The Coverts Project moderates a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 74 members. Many Coverts volunteers are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (2,084 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.



Working for Wildlife: **Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2018**

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 2018 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 36% 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 2018 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2018 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	436
# Cooperators returning surveys	159 (36%)

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	5444
Time spent working to conserve my own land	2704
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.)	2532
Serving on a conservation commission	2273
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1614
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	1530
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	1174
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	1087
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	852
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	606
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	600
Volunteered for a citizen science or wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, BioBlitz events)	597
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	571
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	468
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	398
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	270
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	265
Other	1949
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2018	24,934

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2018 was **24,934 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 36% of active volunteers who returned surveys.

Special Opportunities to Volunteer

Speaking for Wildlife

Coverts Updates and other communications 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*. The project started in 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 209 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 2018 include:

- Held training workshop involving 11 new volunteers
- Launched 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, threats to the species, and conservation actions.
- Volunteers delivered 36 public presentations reaching 761 people
- Volunteers led 16 public field walks with 290 participants

Nature Groupie

Nature Groupie, 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 is project manager for Nature Groupie, and both current Coverts coordinator Haley Andreozzi and project staff Emma Tutein work on the Nature Groupie team.

In 2018, Nature Groupie (formerly The Stewardship Network: New England), connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 127 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire and beyond. The project's weekly e-bulletin and online calendar promoted 396 stewardship projects and workdays and 57 ongoing citizen science opportunities to a growing network of 3,093 interested volunteers and professionals, including all active Coverts Cooperators. Nature Groupie staff also provide technical assistance to researchers and conservation organizations on how to work with volunteers, and implement a web-based registration system that enables partner organizations to easily recruit and communicate with new volunteers. The Nature Groupie team 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. These guides are included in the resources made available to Coverts volunteers. The project's website can be found at naturegroupie.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:

"The Coverts training gave me the background and tools I needed to feel prepared when developing my timber management plan with my forester. We were able to take advantage of resources to enhance the management plan with a focus on developing wildlife habitat."

Land Stewardship Statistics:

Acres Owned by survey respondents	14,109 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	96,868 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	90 (57% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	54,108 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	88,162 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2018 (survey respondents only).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2018 (# acres managed, by habitat type)

Resource Inventory	13,887 acres
Wetland Enhancement	1,881 acres
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	1,407 acres
Timber Stand Improvement	994 acres
Hardwood Management	650 acres
Early Successional Management	502 acres
Softwood Management	284 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 described an experience from this year:

"Recently we hosted a number of folks from a workshop sponsored by [the local conservation district]. Seeing people enjoying our land as much as we do was so rewarding. One person felt they did not have enough land to protect but as we talked, he said it butted up to a rare wetland. I was able to encourage him to talk to [a local land trust] about putting an easement on it. Helping people save land like that is so cool."

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2018	9,227 acres
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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 shared:

"Over the past two years we have done work on our land to create early successional habitat. This past spring, we had noticeably more male woodcock displaying and were able to share the experience with more people who are in a position to do or influence habitat work on other land. We hope that we can have an impact."

Coverts volunteer participation in outreach efforts – including through direct contact, leading tours and workshops, media, the *Speaking for Wildlife* program (p. 10), etc. – plays an important role in raising public awareness about wildlife and habitats statewide.

Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2018 with stewardship message through outreach efforts	16,854 people
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NH Coverts Project Initiatives for 2019

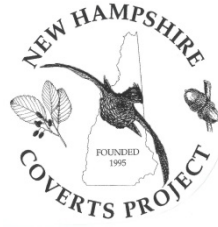
Coverts Project Communication – Continue use of the new Coverts website and blog posts to focus on stories about Coverts volunteer activities and project updates. Continue social media and website work with the Forestry & Wildlife Facebook page, the NH Coverts Facebook Group, Taking Action for Wildlife website (a collaboration with NH Fish & Game), and Speaking for Wildlife website.

Promotion of Volunteer Opportunities – Offer continued trainings for Speaking for Wildlife and in 2019. We will continue to expand access to citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities and training through the Nature Groupie online hub, e-newsletter, and social media.

Annual Training Workshop – The 2019 NH Coverts Project Annual Training Workshop will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 15-18, 2019. Holding the workshop in the spring allows for the incorporation of relevant content in the field 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 2018 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2018

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2018 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2018 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2018 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2018 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2018](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)