



New Hampshire Coverts Project *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*

2016 Annual Report



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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 - 2016

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, 2015 – September 30, 2016), 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 2016” 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 – 2016

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 over \$36,000 in 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 \$700,000 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 2016.

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

Volunteer Recruitment

Each winter, 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 2016 application form is included in the Appendix.

The Training Workshop, 2016

Twenty-two new Coverts Cooperators from 21 different communities were accepted and attended the 2016 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 4-7, 2016. 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 2016 workshop agenda, which contains 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 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 box, page 4).

Evaluation Results – 2016 Coverts Workshop

- **100% of respondents were glad they attended the workshop**
- **Most (95%) 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**
- **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 (8 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (6 people)*
 - *The importance of clear cuts and fields to wildlife (4 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (3 people)*
- **100% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
 - *Get involved in town conservation projects*
 - *Learn more about species and habitats, and share knowledge with others*
 - *Inventory vernal pools on my property*
 - *Become more involved with habitat and forest stewardship*
 - *Create pollinator habitat and soft edges*
 - *Get more involved in my area*
 - *Work on a forest management plan for our woodlot*
 - *Manage my forest for wildlife habitat*
 - *Have a greater public involvement*
 - *Rethink how I harvest timber and firewood*
 - *Plan future projects through the lens of wildlife habitat management*
 - *Manage my land differently using science-based information*
 - *Utilize trainings to learn how to educate others*
 - *Hire a forester*

New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2016

Below is a list of the new 2016 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Jerry Barnes** of New London wants to work with his wife, Janie, to develop a plan for their property, in part to manage their land for wildlife habitat.
- **Janie Barnes** of New London hopes to connect with the local school to find a way that their property can be used for education on wildlife and habitats.
- **Jennifer Beck** of Wilton will develop and present an outreach plan focused on environmental engagement to her fellow conservation commission members, which includes a photo contest, trail work, and lectures.
- **Traci Bisson** of Barrington wants to lead walks on conserved land in Barrington, and plans to implement land stewardship practices on her property.
- **Jane Bjork** of Hopkinton plans to join Speaking for Wildlife, and wants to staff wildlife exhibits.
- **Charles Cieri** of Lisbon wants to work to develop a management plan for the property where he lives, and use it as a timber harvest demonstration area.
- **Jocelyn Duffy** of Franklin wants to attend a Speaking for Wildlife training, and deliver presentations and field walks on local conservation land, as well as volunteer with her local land trust.
- **Karen Fitzgerald** of Frankestown will continue to serve on the conservation commission, and plans to serve on the town's Master Plan Update committee.
- **Sandy Goodspeed** of Epping will continue to serve on her conservation commission and will work with her fellow commissioners to develop a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI).
- **Frank Gorga** of Antrim will continue to serve on the conservation commission, and also wants to develop a management plan for his 75 acre woodlot.
- **Arthur Hembrough** of Andover, MA (with land in Franklin) wants to walk his land with his County Forester to review management options, and hopes to invite his neighbors to walk his woodlot.
- **Mike Ivone** of Center Barnstead wants to inventory the plant and wildlife species on his property, and hopes to develop a management plan.
- **James Kibler** of Hampton Falls wants to pursue the development of a natural history column in his community's magazine that would include use of his photographs.
- **Cindy Lebsack** of Windham wants to work with her forester to integrate wildlife management into the current forest management plan for her property, and plans to invite others to visit her land.
- **Emily Lord** of Middleton is a new board member for her local land trust and hopes to assist with land protection efforts in her region, as well as lead a nature/photo walk on a local conservation property.
- **Robin Macrae Haubrich** of Frankestown plans to redesign her local land trust's website to include more information on wildlife conservation, as well as lead walks on local conservation land.
- **Gretchen Nugent** of Portsmouth wants to join the Speaking for Wildlife program and plans to develop a program/activity for youth that addresses wildlife conservation.
- **Kurt Olson** of Rochester plans to develop a forest stewardship plan for his property, and will also pursue the implementation of a conservation easement on his property.
- **Linda Rhodes** of Durham plans to develop and implement a management plan on her property, and document and share her learning process through a blog.
- **Mark Vernon** of New London wants to manage early-successional habitat on his property, and will continue to work on land conservation and management as a member of the conservation commission.
- **Ruth Ward** of Stoddard will continue to steward a 3,000 acre SPNHF property, and also plans to inventory the vernal pools on her own property.
- **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, re-locations, deaths, etc.), we have 402 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 – 2016

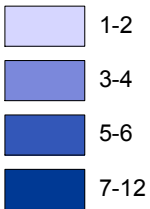
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
2010	24
2011	25
2012	22
2013	21
2014	22
2015	23
2016	22
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	523
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/16	402
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/16	175+

Location of Active Volunteers

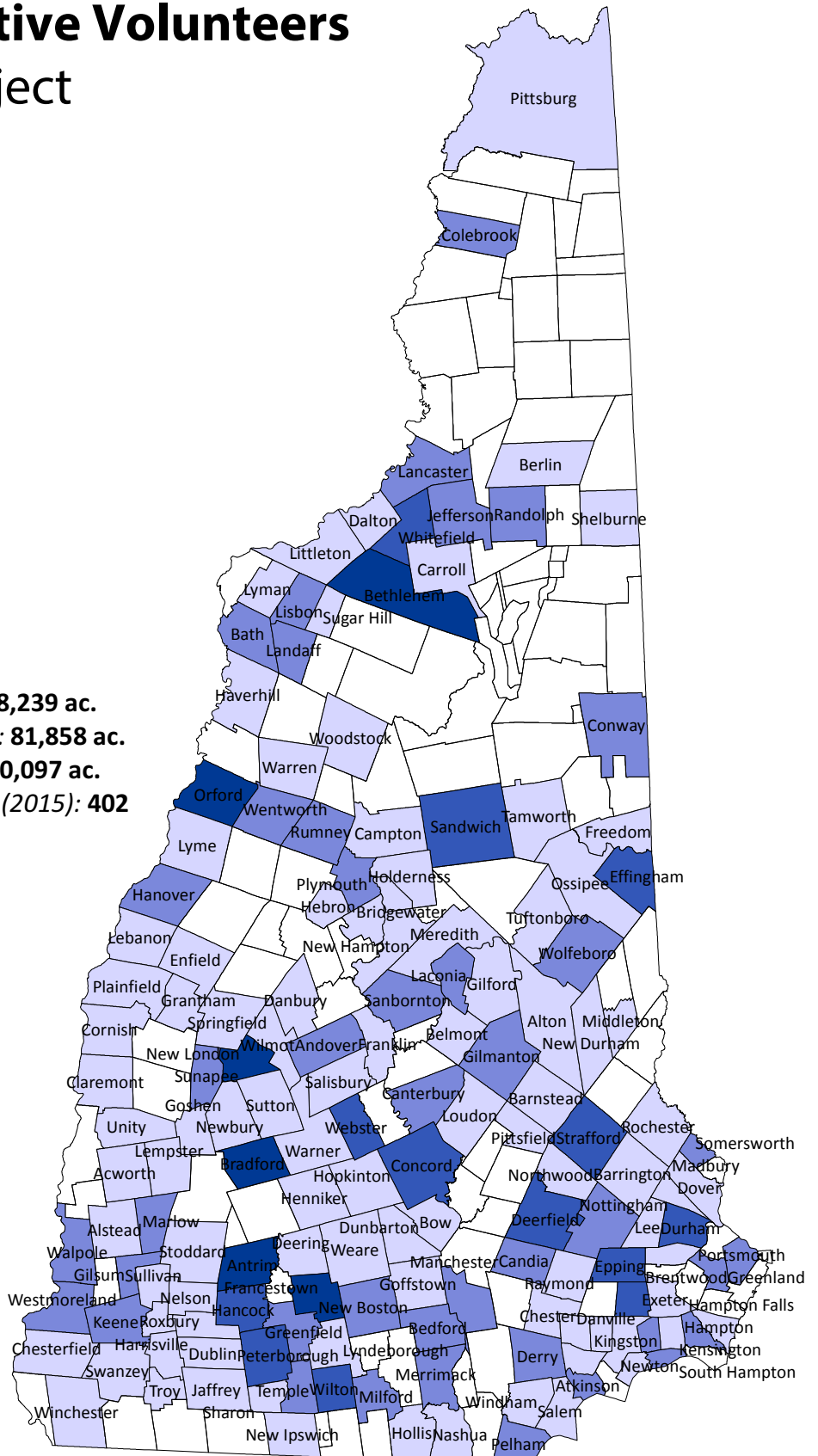
NH Coverts Project

1995-2016

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Acres Owned by Volunteers: **58,239 ac.**
 Acres Managed by Volunteers: **81,858 ac.**
 Total Acres in Stewardship: **140,097 ac.**
 Total No. of Active Volunteers (2015): **402**

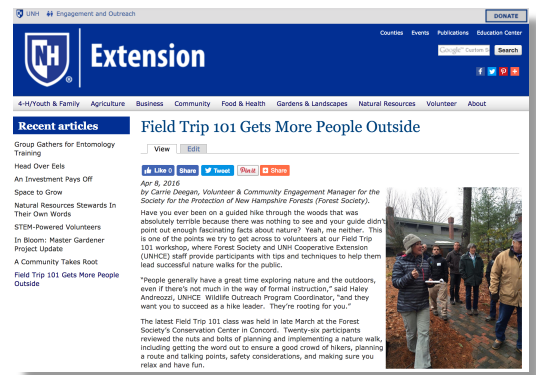


2016 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

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 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 2016, 23 Coverts 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 2015, the Coverts Project office has posted 20 different news items. During this year, there were 2,129 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 62 members. Many are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (1,796 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-one Coverts Cooperators and project staff gathered on February 5, 2016 for a wildlife tracking workshop at the Shaker Village in Canterbury, 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.

Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2016: *Working 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 2016 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 39% of active Coverts volunteers in 2016, well above what is typically considered an acceptable survey response rate and still offering a strong picture of active volunteerism on the part of Coverts volunteers.

Coverts Survey Responses in 2016 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2015 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	391
# Cooperators returning surveys	154 (39%)

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

Volunteer Activity	No. of Hours
Time spent helping manage or steward town forest or other conservation land (e.g. management planning, volunteer workdays, trail work, invasive control, planting natives)	5526
Time spent working to conserve my own land	2350
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	2175
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	1421
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	1282
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	1257
Serving on a conservation commission	1233
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	1224
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	876
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	806
Writing and providing information to media about natural re-sources or conservation	784
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	728
Time spent working to manage my own land for wildlife habitat	671
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	516
Volunteered for a citizen science or wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	515
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	404
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	340
Other	820
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2016	22928

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2016 was **22,928 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 39% of active volunteers who returned surveys.

Special Opportunities to Volunteer

Speaking for Wildlife Project

The Coverts updates and blog help 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 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 176 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 2016 include:

- Held 1 training workshop involving 23 new volunteers
- Worked to update the data and information in all six current Speaking for Wildlife presentations, including consulting with NH Fish and Game biologists
- Acquired funding and purchased new laptops for use by volunteers in all ten New Hampshire counties
- Volunteers delivered 35 public presentations reaching 739 people
- Volunteers led 15 public field walks with 184 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 its official launch in April 2014, The Stewardship Network: New England has connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 164 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire. The Network’s weekly e-bulletin and online calendar has promoted 496 stewardship projects and workdays and 48 ongoing citizen science opportunities to a growing network of 1,950+ interested volunteers and professionals, including all active Coverts Cooperators. Network staff also provide technical assistance to scientists 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 five training guides offering instruction materials for training volunteers in stewardship and educational activities, increasing

our 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, and organizing a volunteer workday. 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:

“We restored part of an old field into a one-acre pollinator site. It was prepped and seeded this past spring and now is beginning to flower. We just hosted a 20-person pollinator workshop [which] included a talk and a site visit. We are in the process of adding four more acres of pollinator habitat. It’s great to be able to share our efforts with the community and hopefully encourage others to consider planting for our declining pollinators.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

Acres Owned by survey respondents	14,739 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	67,468 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	81 (52% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	58,239 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	81,858 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2016 (survey respondents only).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2016 (# acres managed, by habitat type)	
Resource Inventory	2268 acres
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	859 acres
Timber Stand Improvement	640 acres
Hardwood Management	638 acres
Early Successional Management	543 acres
Softwood Management	328 acres
Wetland Enhancement	236 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 and stewardship:

"As a member of my town's Conservation Commission, I am helping to create a vision that includes land conservation, habitat preservation and responsible planning for the next generation. Many of the things I learned in the Coverts training is helping to inform this work."

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2016	4,353 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 reported a highlight from this past year:

"As a speaker in the Speaking for Wildlife program, I have made presentations to people of all ages. In addition to providing them with previously unknown information, I also gained [a lot] from their comments and stories. The one presentation that stands out was to forty 4th grade students who reside in a city neighborhood. [...] Their questions and comments showed an interest level I had not expected. [...]. They are the future of wildlife in New Hampshire"

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 2016 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, Speaking for Wildlife, etc.	15,247 people
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NH Coverts Project Initiatives for 2017

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 to be scheduled for Spring 2017. 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 2017 NH Coverts Project Annual Training Workshop will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 3-6, 2017. Holding the workshop in the spring allows for the incorporation valuable seasonal content and provides the opportunity for newly trained Coverts Cooperators to take immediate actions following the workshop.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Project Advisory Committee meets approximately once every 18 months 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. Five new members from the most recent 2016 class were added to the roster of advisors.

Continuing Education for Cooperators – The Coverts Project is organizing a 2-day workshop for volunteers already trained as Coverts volunteers to be held in February 2017. This continuing education opportunity will focus on winter ecology and wildlife, and will be held at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield on February 25-26, 2017. Workshop sessions will include wildlife tracking, winter tree and shrub identification, wildlife adaptations for winter, 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 2016 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2016

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2016 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2016 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2016 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2016 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2016](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)