

# A Backyard Haven for Wildlife

## The Ellingwoods

You don't need to own hundreds of acres to manage your property for wildlife, and the Ellingwoods have proof. Mark and Susan have lived on their 7 acre property in Hancock for 20 years, and over that time they've taken simple, but thoughtful steps to create a haven for wildlife right in their own backyard.



Mark Ellingwood (right) talks to volunteers from the NH Coverts Program (NHCoverts.org) about his yard.

When deciding how to manage the property, Mark notes, "I look at what my neighbors have, and I try to offer something different for wildlife." For the Ellingwoods, that's meant cutting down small patches of forest and allowing them to regrow into young forest habitat for species like woodcock and ruffed grouse. Compared to wildlife openings created on larger properties, these openings totaling about 1.5 acres may seem small, but it's providing different habitat from the surrounding landscape.

Another way the Ellingwoods have improved their backyard for wildlife is by letting a portion of their lawn revert to what looks like a small patch of wildflower meadow. They only mow this area once every other year or so, and as a result it's packed with milkweed, goldenrod, thistle, and other wildflowers that benefit wildlife and insects.



Asters and other wildflowers provide important habitat for pollinators and other wildlife in the Ellingwoods' yard.

It may sound like a lot of work for a small property, but Mark is quick to note that he only works on a little bit each year, "One year I might focus on removing invasive plants, the next year I might cut down some larger trees, and the next use the brush saw to maintain my young forest." It's clear from Mark and Susan's enthusiasm for wildlife that they don't mind doing the work, and it's certainly worth it for all the wildlife they've observed on their small piece of land.

### What You Can Do

- Consider allowing parts of your lawn to grow tall, only mowing once per year or less.
- Observe wildlife in your yard to learn what parts of your yard are important to them.
- Even small patches of young forest habitat can be valuable for wildlife.



Young forest at the Mitchells' five years after the brontosaurus cut.

## One Step Further

- Habitat management is not always appropriate. Learn about your property and the surrounding landscape to determine what's best for you and your land.
- Learn more about conservation options to find out if land conservation is right for your property.
- Share your story! Invite neighbors or host a walk to visit your land and see the work you've done for wildlife.

### Taking Action for WILDLIFE

**We bring information about NH's wildlife to you!** The Taking Action for Wildlife Team, made up of staff from NH Fish and Game and UNH Cooperative Extension, works to help communities, land trusts, private landowners and others conserve wildlife and habitats in New Hampshire. We help put information from NH's Wildlife Action Plan in the hands of NH citizens. The NH Wildlife Action Plan identifies habitats and species in greatest need of conservation, identifies threats to their continued existence, and suggests actions to help address these issues.

**Here are some examples of ways we can help you (for free)! We can:**

- Meet with your town's Conservation Commission to help incorporate wildlife and habitats into natural resource inventories and conservation plans, and create educational programs to teach others about wildlife.
- Connect private landowners and towns with County Foresters and Wildlife Specialists to discuss recommendations for improving and creating wildlife habitat.
- Help land trusts and other conservation organizations use NH's Wildlife Action Plan for conservation planning, land management and outreach.

### Visit

**[www.takingactionforwildlife.org](http://www.takingactionforwildlife.org)**  
**for help creating natural resources inventories,  
conservation planning, managing habitat, and more.**

**Authorship:** This brochure was produced by UNH Cooperative Extension, an equal opportunity educator and employer. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating. Funding for this brochure was provided by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Written by Emma Carcagno with Malin Clyde and Frank Mitchell. June 2015.  
**Photo Credits:** Emma Carcagno, Malin Clyde, Nanci, Charlie Mitchell, and Amerigo Tannoni.

## Taking Action for Wildlife

### NEW HAMPSHIRE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

## LANDOWNERS TAKE ACTION FOR WILDLIFE



**University of  
New Hampshire**  
Cooperative Extension





What can landowners do to take action for wildlife? About 70% of land in New Hampshire is privately owned. The actions landowners take on their own properties are instrumental in protecting and maintaining valuable wildlife habitats throughout the state.

For more details on the stories featured here and to see additional stories, visit [www.takingactionforwildlife.org](http://www.takingactionforwildlife.org)

# Taking the Long View

## The Tellmans



Moose like a mix of mature and young forests where they can find plenty of food.

The Tellmans know their property intimately. While they are knowledgeable and do a lot of management work themselves, they also know when to seek advice and assistance. Dave and Tanya Tellman bought their land in Bethlehem back in 1969, but didn't live on the property year-round until they built a house there in 1990. They then had a management plan prepared by a consulting forester to help lay out and execute their long-term vision. Their objectives include periodic timber harvests to improve the quality of the forest, improving wildlife and plant habitats, and protecting special places on the property, like rocky ledges and a large fen. The Tellmans want visitors to see that forestry is compatible with wildlife and plants. Says Tanya, "Our foresters used to look at me strangely when I asked them to avoid areas with special wildflowers or interesting plants, but these days, they don't seem to think it's all that odd, so I guess things have changed a bit."

The forest management they've done on the property has certainly benefitted wildlife. Dave and Tanya regularly see moose, bear, porcupine,



Tanya and Dave Tellman look out from the rocky ledges on their property in Bethlehem, NH.

beaver, and a variety of songbirds. When asked if they had ever done any monitoring of wildlife on their land Tanya said, "No, not really," in her self-effacing way. "But we've been keeping a journal of our activities over the last thirty years...it includes gardening, forestry, and wildlife observations." A great example of how they've come to know their property so well.

### What You Can Do

- Think long-term when developing objectives for your land.
- Work with professionals (your County Forester, consulting foresters, wildlife biologists, etc.) when managing your land.
- Keep a journal of management actions and wildlife observations to get to know your land better!

# Learning to Love Young Forests

## The Mitchells

When Nanci and Charlie Mitchell first looked at the land in Gilmanton that eventually became their home, they were disheartened by the management that had taken place there. About 50 acres of forest had been clearcut. "We said to ourselves, this is the ugliest thing we've ever seen!" remarked Charlie Mitchell, but their ideas about young forest habitat were soon to change. They noticed that despite the "ugly" appearance of the young forest, their property was home to many species of wildlife. "We



A brontosaurus was used to create young forest habitat on the Mitchells' property.



Nanci and Charlie Mitchell enjoying the view from their property in Gilmanton, NH.

were delighted to learn that we had whip-poor-will on the property, even at 4 a.m. when they were calling," chuckled Nanci. They also frequently viewed American woodcock and Eastern towhees, but noticed over time that some of these birds were disappearing from the property.

With the help of their consulting forester, UNH Cooperative Extension's Wildlife Specialist, and with grants from the Natural Resources Conservation

Service (NRCS), they've worked to create some new openings to increase the amount of young forest habitat on their property. They've seen the return of the woodcock, whip-poor-will, towhees, and even other bird species they hadn't noticed before like indigo buntings. The Mitchells then took the extra step of conserving their property by putting a conservation easement on it. Charlie summed up their experience, "Our outlook has really changed. Now instead of an ugly young forest, we see amazing wildlife habitat!"

### What You Can Do

- Find out more about which wildlife species are using your land and take an active role in creating habitat.
- Learn more about conservation easements and other conservation options.
- Consult with professionals about financial assistance available for habitat management.

# Caring for Family Lands

## The Phillips



Ruffed grouse seek dense, young forests to feed and nest safe from predators.

Mark and Juliana Phillips' home in Webster is on 700 acres that has been in Mark's family for generations. Over time, the land has seen changes—pastures grew in and habitats shifted. "It was a classic New England abandoned farm," Mark says. The result was less wildlife than when the land was a mix of farm and forest."

When they settled in Webster, the Phillips sought learning opportunities such as joining the New Hampshire

Coverts Project, a wildlife-focused volunteer program, which inspired them to take action on their land. Mark and Juliana got guidance from their

County Forester and the state Wildlife Specialist, who visited the property and suggested options based on the Phillips' goals and the land's qualities. The Phillips created two small patch cuts in their woods, paid for in part by pine timber cut from the site. They left a considerable amount of woody material (branches, etc.) on the ground as habitat structure to benefit species that live at or near ground level, such as ruffed grouse and red-backed salamanders. They also delay mowing on some fields to benefit grassland nesting birds and other animals.

### What You Can Do

- Revenue generated from a timber sale can help pay for other management activities for wildlife.
- If you have large fields, consider delayed mowing to benefit grassland birds.
- Participate in the NH Coverts Project – visit [www.NHcoverts.org](http://www.NHcoverts.org) to learn how.



Mark and Juliana Phillips at their property in Webster, NH.

Juliana and Mark appreciate the results of their work as they've seen bears, grouse, owls, hawks, snakes and countless other wildlife. As Mark put it, "We haven't done anything dramatic, but the results are dramatic."