



New Hampshire Coverts Project *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*

2019 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 - 2019

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, 2018 – September 30, 2019), 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, *NH Coverts Project: Program Highlights 2019*, 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 NH 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. The program regularly receives voluntary donations and contributions.

Haley Andreozzi, the UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Program Manager, coordinates the NH Coverts Project. The Coverts Project receives 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, a recognized leadership role

within their community, and the ability to utilize the information and resources provided at the workshop. A copy of the 2019 application form is included in the Appendix.

Training Workshop, 2019

Twenty-four new Coverts Cooperators from twenty-three different communities were accepted and attended the 2019 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 15-18, 2019. 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 2019 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. At the end of the workshop, 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 overall workshop experience and on topics, materials, and speakers during the training. We also assess how their experience at the workshop changed their knowledge, 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: 2019 Coverts Workshop

- **100%** of respondents were **glad they attended** the workshop
- **100%** 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
- **96%** of participants strongly agreed that 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 forests and wildlife (9 people)*
 - *The importance of young forest to wildlife (5 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (6 people)*
 - *Networking and learning about resources and contacts (8 people)*
- **100%** of respondents reported they **would do something differently** as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:
 - *Reevaluate the work I’m doing on my own property*
 - *Manage my own backyard in a more thoughtful and deliberate way*
 - *Think about managing our land rather than just letting it be*
 - *Manage my property for wildlife and make it a demonstration area*
 - *Speak up more on how land can be managed to benefit wildlife*
 - *Manage my property actively*
 - *More community volunteerism*
 - *Attend more trainings*
 - *Review landscape scale conservation status in my region*
 - *Get more involved at the local level in conservation education/outreach and action*
 - *Hire a forester to prepare a forest management plan*
 - *Get more involved and informed with conservation issues in my community*
 - *Share my knowledge with friends, neighbors, colleagues and community members*
 - *Share this new knowledge with organizations and friends*
 - *Manage my property in a responsible manner*
 - *Take actions to conserve/manage my own land*
- **92%** of respondents reported they **had not previously managed for early-successional habitat, but intend to** after the workshop

New Coverts Volunteers: **Action Plans for 2019**

Below is a list of the new 2019 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they live or own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Dani Almeida** from Haverhill, MA plans to offer workshops for landowners involved with Southeast Land Trust (where she works).
- **Pam Avery** from Frankestown hopes to update maps and information for their 7 town forests and lead walks.
- **Julie Brown** from Alton Bay wants to participate in the Speaking for Wildlife program.
- **Vicki Brown** from East Kingston plans to collaborate with neighboring towns to develop conservation priorities based on wildlife habitat.
- **Linda Clark** from Webster plans to work on pollinator gardens outside the library and elementary school in her town.
- **Beth Ann Corwin** from Peterborough wants to explore solutions to and raise awareness of the impact of rogue mountain bike trails on wildlife habitat in her area.
- **Alisha DiMasi** from Lyndeborough plans to inventory the status of green burial on conservation lands in New Hampshire.
- **Megan Glenn** from Portsmouth hopes to start a community conversation in her neighborhood about how they can collectively help wildlife.
- **Susan Goodwin** from Wolfeboro plans to talk to her neighborhood association about managing land for wildlife.
- **Mark Kaplan** from Boscawen plans to walk his property with his county forester and take steps to implement at least one management action for wildlife.
- **Melanie Kerr** from Sugar Hill plans to add interpretive signs to the existing trail at a local conservation property.
- **Don Kollisch** from Hanover plans to join the Balch Hill Stewardship Committee of the Hanover Conservancy.
- **Joseph Miller** from North Haverhill plans to survey his property for invasives.
- **Sara Munroe** from Exeter wants to participate in invasive plant workdays and provide more education around invasives in her area.
- **Richard Pendleton** from Peterborough
- **Cathy Phillips** from Boston wants to research and inventory natural resources on the island camp in New Hampshire where she spends summers.
- **George Rollend** from Amherst plans to reach out to and join his town's conservation commission.
- **Alison Scheiderer** from Epsom wants to incorporate information and resources into her work training volunteers to monitor conservation easements.
- **Rebecca Scott** from Hampton plans to use her new knowledge and resources in her work as land steward for two properties in New Hampshire.
- **Alayna Signorello** from Jefferson plans to talk to fellow teachers about incorporating citizen science, outdoor learning, and environmental science for hands-on learning in their schoolyard.
- **Michael Swisher** from Merrimack hopes to incorporate wildlife and habitat information into his fiction writing as a way to reach more people.
- **Mike Thomas** from Deering plans to use the concepts he's learned in his work as a land trust board member to more effectively evaluation conservation priorities.
- **Katy Wardlaw** from Dublin wants to create early-successional habitat on her property.
- **Vivian Winterhoff** from Bethlehem wants to get involved with her town's conservation commission.



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 453 active volunteers today, working in over 165 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 – 2019

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
2019	24
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	593
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/19	453
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/19	165+

Coverts Outreach and Communication

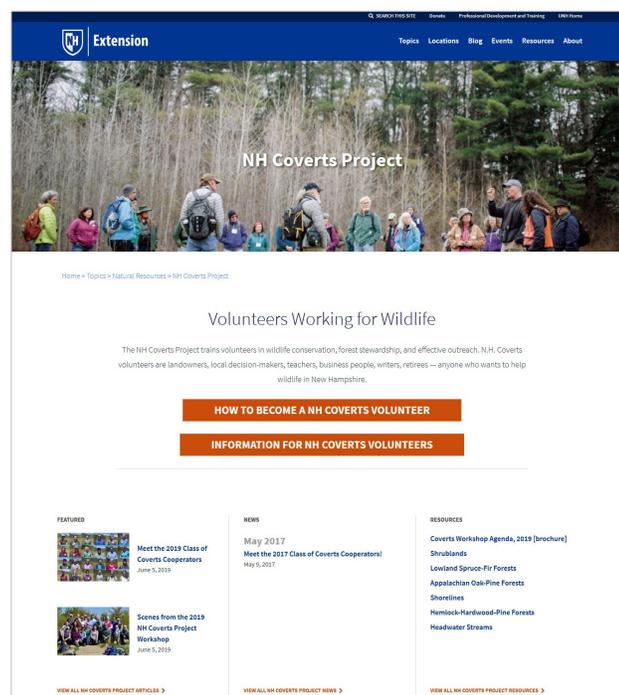
The Coverts Project connects Coverts Cooperators to events, workshops, news, and new volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Through these activities, they build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training workshop. Many of these activities are a result of UNH Cooperative Extension partnering with other natural resources programs and conservation partners, thereby broadening our training audience and offering more continuing education opportunities for all natural resources volunteers.

Coverts Updates – These e-mail newsletters are the main communication tool between the project office and Coverts Cooperators. In 2019, 13 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 Library – This web-based library has become integral in providing information and resources for Coverts volunteers. Cooperators are able to access recommended resources on a variety of related topics, including wildlife habitats and species, habitat management, forest ecology and stewardship, the NH Wildlife Action Plan, land conservation, and effective communication. The Coverts Library can be accessed at: extension.unh.edu/resource/coverts-library.

Coverts Project Website – The NH Coverts Project website (*right*) makes it easy for NH Coverts volunteers to identify and access resources, news, and events that might be of interest to them. Blog posts specific to the NH Coverts Project and Cooperators are featured on the page. It also streamlines information for individuals who are interested in learning more about and potentially participating in the Coverts Project. The NH Coverts Project website can be accessed at nhcoverts.org.

NH Coverts Facebook Group –The Coverts Project moderates a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 78 members. Many Coverts volunteers are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (2,236 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 2019**

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 2019 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 30% of active Coverts volunteers, well within the range of 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 2019 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2019 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	453
# Cooperators returning surveys	137 (30%)

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	3623
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.)	2794
Serving on a conservation commission	2137
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	2076
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	1558
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	1541.5
Time spent working to conserve my own land	1333
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1002
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	794
Volunteered for a citizen science or wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	785
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	591
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	558
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	456
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	412
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	332
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	262
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	261.5
Other	1086
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2019	21,602

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2019 was **21,602 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 30% 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 with support 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 by funds from the NH Fish and Game Department.

We have a group of 212 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 2019 include:

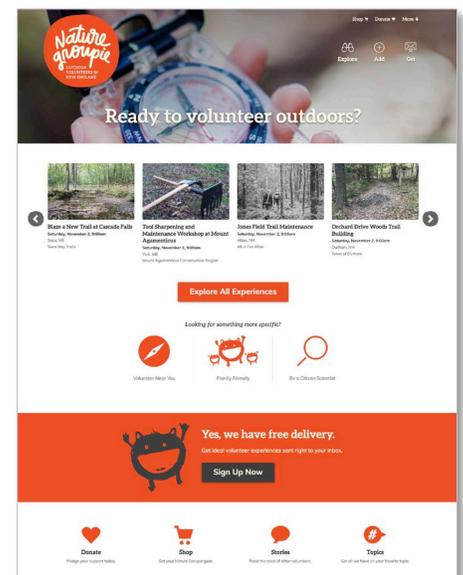
- Held training workshop involving 11 new volunteers
- Volunteers delivered 29 public presentations reaching 462
- Volunteers led 14 public field walks with 183 participants

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 (former NH Coverts Project coordinator) is the Nature Groupie project manager, and current Coverts coordinator Haley Andreozzi and project staff Emma Tutein both work on the Nature Groupie team.

In 2019, Nature Groupie connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 121 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire and beyond. The project's weekly e-bulletin and online calendar promoted 287 stewardship projects and workdays and 54 ongoing citizen science opportunities to a growing network of 4,117 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 partners (including Coverts Cooperators) to easily recruit and communicate with new 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:

“We have been managing our land for early successional habitat. This involves mowing some fields and edges, fighting invasives, hosting opportunities for viewing the skydance of the woodcock, and learning about species that require regenerating habitat for some aspect of their life cycle. Since our harvest, we are seeing a significant increase in the diversity of species using our property and in their numbers.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

Acres owned by survey respondents	10,212 acres
Acres where survey respondents are involved in management decisions	108,272 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	78 (57% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	51,927 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	93,357 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2019 (survey respondents only).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2019 (# acres managed, by habitat type)	
Resource Inventory	6,209 acres
Timber Stand Improvement	2,731 acres
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	977 acres
Hardwood Management	841 acres
Wetland Enhancement	555 acres
Early Successional Management	368 acres
Softwood Management	151 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 shared:

"I am looking forward to completing my goal of enhancing a parcel of town-owned land this year. The project included developing a land management plan and then implementing it. The plan included a selective logging operation with wildlife clearings, creating a trail system with kiosks and maps, installing a parking area, and building two bridges. We engaged residents for the work and boy scouts built the kiosks. The goal is to maximize the value of this town-owned asset for the benefit of residents for recreation, wildlife, and the environment."

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2019	8,409 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:

"Since participating in my Coverts training this year ('19) my knowledge base has increased significantly. I now feel empowered to speak up in groups of various sizes and functions to educate and advocate for forests and wildlife. This has taken shape during 1-on-1 conversations, in small groups at volunteer meetings, and hosting events at my property. The ripple effects are palpable in all facets of my life."

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 2019 with stewardship message through outreach efforts	15,295 people
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NH Coverts Project Initiatives for 2020

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 UNH Extension Forestry & Wildlife Facebook page, the NH Coverts Facebook Group, and Taking Action for Wildlife website (a collaboration with NH Fish & Game).

Promotion of Volunteer Opportunities – Project staff will continue to promote volunteer trainings and opportunities to Cooperators, and share information about upcoming events through Coverts Updates. We will continue to expand volunteer access to citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities and training from 200+ conservation organizations through the Nature Groupie website, e-newsletter, and social media. We will also provide training opportunities for Speaking for Wildlife in 2020.

Annual Training Workshop – The 2020 NH Coverts Project Annual Training Workshop will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 13-16, 2020. 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 2019 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2019

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2019 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2019 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2019 NH Coverts Project Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2019 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2019](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)