

Integration of Forestry & Wildlife Management



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Abstract: Kentucky SIC (Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee) has a mission to provide information and technical assistance to landowners on sustainable forestry. The following article will provide background information on wildlife management, with supporting web address to provide landowners with a source for additional information. The scope of the article is not to discuss technical features of wildlife management, but to provide landowners a source of additional information on wildlife management. This is by no means a comprehensive list of wildlife web sites, but will provide an adequate starting point to gather information and technical assistance for wildlife management assistance.

Forestry & Wildlife

Forestry and wildlife are linked by a complex set of environmental factors that create biologically diverse systems. Forests provide a variety of habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms. Kentucky is blessed with an abundance of complex hardwood forests. According to the Kentucky Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources, 47 % of the land base is forested.

“The interaction between wildlife and plant communities, which include forests is crucial. Wildlife, both game and non-game species use the forest for a variety of reasons. Wildlife is intricately linked to the forests of Kentucky,” said Dr. Tom Barnes, Extension Professor & Wildlife Extension Specialist at the University of Kentucky.

The vast majority of wildlife depends on Kentucky forests for their basic requirements of food, cover, water and space. Different wildlife species require different stages of a forest ecosystem to meet these needs. Wildlife species are associated with a forest at a particular successional stage because of the type and amounts of habitat that are provided by that stage. These stages can be strategically managed to enhance wildlife habitat on your property.

Bob Bauer, Executive Director of the Kentucky Forest Industries Association said “the wood industry is spread throughout the state. Kentucky forest industries accounts for a direct economic impact of \$4.6 billion annually. This is an important economic driver for the entire state. Wood industry relies on forest resources for raw materials. Timber harvests can have a positive effect on wildlife habitat if conducted properly.”

Wildlife management is the process of keeping wild species at desirable levels on your property. Wildlife management can include game keeping, habitat enhancement, conservation methods and pest control. Wildlife management has become an integrated science using several disciplines and techniques to obtain desired objectives. Wildlife management provides aesthetic, recreational opportunities and revenue from leasing to benefit landowners.

The Kentucky Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources stated that 78% of Kentucky forestland is privately owned. A disturbing statistic is that 88% of these landowners do not have a plan to manage their natural resources.

Technical Help and Assistance:
University of Kentucky Extension
www.ukforestry.org

“Developing a plan is critical to increasing the odds of meeting your goals for wildlife management. Without a plan, it’s a hit or miss proposition,” said Dr. Barnes. Properly developed plans will include defining your objectives in terms of wildlife management as follows:

1. Select the wildlife species you want to manage. Silvicultural practices (the manipulation of the forest to meet objectives) will affect wildlife differently. Forest prescriptions will make or provide habitat for some species of wildlife and the same prescription will also take habitat from other species.
2. Choose your objectives. Game management (number and size of animals) will differ from recreation management (such as bird watching for neo-tropical migrants).
3. Get help. “Most landowners don’t have the background or technical knowledge to develop a wildlife management plan,” said Dr. Barnes. Consulting with a qualified resource professional for their help, knowledge and assistance is essential.
4. Implement the plan. Cost shares are available. Be sure to use and incorporate them to meet your objectives.
5. Evaluate the success of the plan.

Plans document these opportunities and help to achieve goals, which is the ultimate reason for planning. “UK extension provides unbiased research information on wildlife management,” said Dr. Barnes. UK Extension developed a series of CD’s called Wildlife Habitat Institute. These self guided educational tools are provided to landowners and discuss the management of quail, deer, turkey, and endangered species.

Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF)
www.forestry.gov

KDF administers the Kentucky Forest Stewardship Program. This program works with private landowners to increase the quality and quantity of Kentucky’s forests, while maintaining and improving habitat for a diverse mixture of wildlife. KDF foresters or other qualified resources professionals will meet with landowners to help prepare a forest stewardship plan based on the landowners goals and objectives for their property. “If you’re managing for timber, you’re also managing for wildlife, you’re manipulating the forest which will affect wildlife habitat,” said Pam Snyder, Forest Management Chief, KY Division of Forestry

Partnerships through KDF & KY Dept of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resource & Conservation Service (NRCS) offer programs to improve wildlife habitat. In all programs, landowners are required to have a Forest Stewardship Plan. “The stewardship plan is the mortar that allows the binding of the management plan to open the door to several USDA farm bill programs for cost share funding, said Snyder.”

The Healthy Forest Reserve Program administered by KDF is a conservation easement program which encourages habitat development for rare, threatened and endangered species by creating and restoring habitat. “The program also allows the

landowner to harvest timber through the easement. This balances timber management and habitat restoration,” said Snyder.

American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

www.treefarmssystem.org

The KDF Stewardship plan is also accepted and meets the requirements for a landowner to become certified in the American Tree Farm System. Certified Tree Farmers are an elite category of private forest owners who exemplify a national standard that is globally recognized as having met standards of sustainability by maintaining the integrity of the forest and its wildlife resources. The ATFS is a globally recognized and a credible source of certified forest products. “Certified Tree Farmers maintain habitat for threatened and endangered species, and the AFF Standards allow landowners to manage for desired species,” said Victoria Lockhart, Certification Manager for American Forest Foundation, which sponsors the ATFS.

US Fish & Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov/partners/

Mike Johnson, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, Wildlife Refuge Manager said “wildlife depends on forest land. Foresters are better trained and factor in all components of ecosystem management, looking at the overall system. They look at all things that make the system operate.” Johnson stresses the importance of obtaining technical assistance, prioritizing what is most important and educating yourself on the requirements of wildlife.

Johnson said “the loss and degradation of habitat is the main cause of declining wildlife population, not harvesting timber. Timber harvests, done properly can provide diversity to the landscape and provide additional habitat.” Johnson stated that “habitat is all components needed or required of the animal to live, survive, & reproduce during his life cycle.” The USF&WS provides the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. This is a result oriented program that provides expert technical assistance and cost share incentives to private landowners to restore fish and wildlife habitat.

Kentucky Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

www.fw.ky.gov

One of the essential ingredients in conserving wildlife in Kentucky is habitat improvement. Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) offers an opportunity for landowners, managers, hunters, and groups to work with wildlife professionals toward a common goal of improving wildlife habitat.

Private lands biologists work in cooperation with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to help landowners attain wildlife and forestry management goals with available cost-shares through federal farm bill programs such as CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program), EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) and WRP (Wetland Reserve Program). The programs involve practices including timber stand improvement (TSI), establishing native warm season grasses, tree planting and shrub establishment. KDF&W also cooperates with many organizations and agencies to benefit wildlife.

“Forest terrestrials (deer, turkey) song birds, neo-tropical migrants, and amphibians, reptiles and fishes found in riparian areas all use the forest and the forests’ multi-varied resources, said Tony Black, Regional Coordinator, KDF&W. The agency has three private lands biologists to assist in setting up cost share programs for landowners through NRCS & FSA through the farm bill program. “Each individual looks at wildlife with different eyes. Whatever you do will affect animals other than the target species,” said Black.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), KY Chapter.

www.nature.org

TNC staff works with KY Fish & Wildlife biologists, Kentucky Division of Forestry and also with private landowners to provide guidance on wildlife management on their lands. “TNC tends to focus on rare species and habitats that are found in the forest system or landscape as a whole, such as a glade community within a forest system, or rare plants and animal communities,” said Jeff Sole, Director of Conservation Programs. TNC works with landowners to provide guidance on rare species for restoration work because of lack of proper management in the past.

KY Chapter of Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF).

www.kacf.org

Foresters have different levels of expertise in dealing with ecosystem management. Chris Will, chairman of the KY Chapter of ACF said “in constructing a forest management plan for a landowner, we will get the local fish and wildlife or private land biologist involved in the management plan. Most landowners contact a consultant because they are interested in revenue or forest management. During discussions to prepare the management plan, reasons for owning the land such as for hunting or other recreational opportunities become apparent. Wildlife management practices can be integrated into their forest management plan.”

David Hale, former owner of Knight & Hale Game Calls agrees. “A good timber management program will enhance wildlife habitat on your land.” Forest management can be augmented with techniques to directly enhance wildlife habitat for game and non game species. Wildlife management can be easily incorporated into existing forest management plans. “The harvest design may not be to the wishes of the guy cutting the timber. He may want to do something different than the landowner wants. You need a person you can trust to work on the ground to carry out the practice,” said Hale.

Forest management provides a diverse habitat for wildlife by integrating biodiversity into strategic forest management planning. Habitat conditions for many species of wildlife are enhanced by management practices that promote timber production, soil conservation, and air and water quality. Dr. Barnes succinctly summed up wildlife management saying “planning and doing are the most important aspects of wildlife management. Once you figure out what you want, put it into action.”

Pictures with captions on following pages:



Proper harvesting techniques can benefit wildlife habitat by creating openings that provide browse.



Creating habitat & maintaining diversity is essential to maintain wildlife habitat. Log landing deck in foreground, sown with soybeans.



Landing deck sown in soybeans. Thinned hardwood in background.



Former log landing site. Note crown of hill to shed water during harvesting operations.



Planning for wildlife habitat can pay dividends. Note turnips sown in foreground.