

You Can Help

The Wildlife Management Institute and its many partners – private, federal, state, and provincial – work together through the Young Forest Project in making thousands of acres of this important habitat for woodcock and other wildlife.

Regional Initiatives are creating young forest in these regions:

- **Northern Forest** (New England, the Adirondack Mountains, and Atlantic Canada)
- **Appalachian Mountains** (southern New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Virginia, and New Jersey)
- **Upper Great Lakes** (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota)
- **Atlantic Coast** (Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia)
- **Lower Great Lakes** (Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Ontario, Quebec)

Biologists have developed **Best Management Practices** for making habitat in each region and can provide technical assistance to landowners and managers who want to get involved. Funding may be available.

Find contact information and learn about habitat demonstration areas in your region at www.timberdoodle.org, www.youngforest.org, and www.newenglandcottontail.org.

Cover image: Tim Flanigan



Wildlife Needs Young Forest

The Woodcock Management Plan



A publication of the
Wildlife Management Institute

www.timberdoodle.org

www.youngforest.org

www.newenglandcottontail.org

Reversing a Trend

During the last half century, as the number of acres of young forest in the East and Upper Midwest has dwindled, populations of many kinds of wildlife have fallen. To reverse that trend, conservationists are working to create more young forest (also called “early successional habitat”).

The American woodcock can be considered an “umbrella species” – a representative of all the animals that use young forest during part or all of their life cycles. By creating woodcock habitat, we can halt and reverse

the decline in the woodcock’s numbers – while at the same time helping more than 60 other kinds of wildlife whose populations have declined as well.

Also called the “timberdoodle,” the American woodcock is a ground-dwelling bird that lives in young upland forest and brushy woods near rivers and streams. It breeds across eastern North America from Atlantic Canada to the Great Lakes region and spends the winter in lowlands mainly in the southern and Gulf Coast states.

Join a Young Forest Regional Initiative and begin using land-management and timber-harvesting techniques to create young forest for woodcock and other wild creatures.

For more information, visit www.timberdoodle.org and www.youngforest.org.

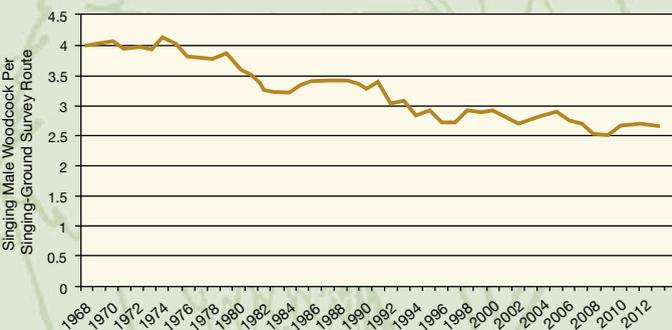
Charles Fergus

Bringing the Woodcock Back

From the 1960s to 2003, woodcock numbers fell by 2 to 3 percent each year. The reason? An ongoing loss of habitat.

Many acres were lost to roads, shopping centers, and housing developments. And as brushy areas grew to become middle-aged and older woodlands, they stopped being useful to woodcock and the myriad other wild creatures that need young forest.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners in Flight, and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative rank helping the woodcock as one of the highest conservation priorities in the eastern United States.



Woodcock numbers, as indexed by the annual Singing-Ground Survey, recently have stabilized and, since 2008, generally have risen. Many scientists believe this population turnaround comes from the thousands of acres of new habitat created through the Young Forest Project.



Timber harvests yield thick new growth for wildlife./Charles Fergus



The chestnut-sided warbler is one of many birds that need the food and cover provided by thick growth of trees and shrubs found in areas of young forest./Tom Berriman

What Must Be Done

In the past, young forest was continually created and renewed by wildfires, floods, and other natural disturbances. Today we largely prevent fires and floods, while our developments keep expanding. We are also doing less logging – in part, because many people don't realize the importance to wildlife of the young forest that quickly springs up following cutting.

To halt and reverse the decline of wildlife that need brushy woods, we must restore, create, and maintain young forest by cutting trees in a responsible manner and in carefully selected places. Because young forest is a dynamic, short-lived phase in a forest's growth cycle, management activities need to be fairly frequent and ongoing.

Scientists and wildlife researchers have calculated how many acres of new young forest are needed to let the woodcock population rebound. Read about these habitat goals in the American Woodcock Conservation Plan at www.timberdoodle.org.

Improve Wildlife Diversity Through:

- **Logging**

Timber harvesting causes stumps and root systems of trees to send up thousands of sprouts, making thickets that woodcock and many other wild animals need.

- **Planting**

Abandoned fields can be planted with light-loving shrubs and trees (alders and aspens are top choices) to create wildlife-friendly young forest.



Woodcock thrive in aspen thickets. /Charles Fergus

- **Mechanical Cutting**

Large machines such as “brontosaurus” cutters can chew down overmature shrubs, including alders. After cutting, the shrubs grow back more densely.

- **Apple Tree Release**

Cutting out shade-casting trees spurs the growth of apple trees and sun-loving shrubs, beneath which woodcock find abundant earthworms to eat. The apple trees and shrubs provide fruit for other animals.



Woodcock habitat provides great homes for rabbits./Victor Young

Woodcock Need Young Forest For:

- **Singing Grounds**

To attract mates in spring, male woodcock call and make dawn-and-dusk courtship flights from clearings, log landings, old fields, and road edges. These openings are also heavily used by many songbirds.

- **Feeding Areas**

Woodcock feed where the soil is moist – alder flats along rivers and wetlands, abandoned farmland, overgrown orchards, and clearcuts up to 20 years old. These places also provide crucial food and hiding places for songbirds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles such as box and wood turtles.

- **Nesting and Brood-Rearing Cover**

Woodcock raise their young in stands of hardwood trees less than 20 years old – where the saplings are so thick that a person might have trouble getting through. Alder and willow flycatchers thrive in these areas, as do snowshoe hares and cottontail rabbits.



Woodcock raise their chicks in stands of young hardwoods.

- **Roosting Areas**

At dusk in summer and early fall, woodcock fly to weedy fields and newly logged woods where they roost beneath patchy plant growth that protects them from both land and aerial predators. Another declining bird species that needs such semi-open habitat is the whip-poor-will.