



## Managing Your Woodland for Wildlife

Many forest landowners are interested in improving their woodland resources and attracting wildlife to their property. Forestry and wildlife management are not only compatible, they are interrelated. Depending on your objectives, you can apply management techniques that influence plant succession and improve habitats for many wildlife species and improve the productivity of your forest. However, developing your property to continually produce timber products and provide wildlife habitat requires an active management plan.

All properties provide habitat (food, cover, water and space) for some wildlife. However, habitats on most lands can be improved. Variations in plant cover (diversity), the type of timber harvest used, water resources, and topography each determine how many species can live in woodland and how abundant those species will be. By implementing management practices, you can create or maintain different succession stages (ages) of forest (e.g., openings, shrubby vegetation, mature forest) and, thus, favor different groups of wildlife.

First conduct an inventory of your property and identify current plant and animal species. Look for unique geologic features (springs, spring seeps, caves, outcrops, streams, etc...) or vegetative features (den trees, desirable fruit producing species, snags) which should be protected or enhanced.

An aerial photograph of your property offers a complete look at the land uses and vegetative cover on your property as well as on adjacent lands. This bird's eye view can help you understand the potential of your land for wildlife and the ways in which you can make it more beneficial. You can identify forest stands, edge habitats, open areas, pastures, water sources, and evaluate their arrangement on your property and surrounding land.

Wildlife management can be facilitated by using sound timber management strategies to provide a diversity of habitats. The key is DIVERSITY. Practices such as timber stand improvement (TSI) or planned commercial

harvests often favor a diversity of mast-producing trees, snags and den trees that are capable of providing food and shelter for wildlife. Mast is a term used to describe the fruits of woody plants. The hard-shelled seeds of oak, hickory and walnut are termed "hard mast." Hard mast is an especially important wildlife food in the fall and winter. It is high in fat content and is available when other plant foods (fleshy fruits and foliage) are not available. The fleshy fruits of trees like black cherry, dogwood and mulberry are termed "soft-mast." It is important to favor a diversity of oaks (both red and white oaks) and soft-mast producing trees and shrubs in your woodland.

Due to the relatively small size of most privately owned forested tracts, few owners have the luxury of managing timber stands which accommodate all the needs of songbirds, hawks, deer, or wild turkey. Therefore you must give consideration to the habitat components available in adjoining stands, the wildlife and timber species most suited to a given site, and the habitat needs most limiting for the primary wildlife species that you may want to manage for on your property.

To be successful be sure to obtain good information. The Missouri Woodland Steward Short Course, conducted by MU Extension and the Missouri Department of Conservation, provides a basic introduction to forestry and wildlife management. In addition, obtain information and professional assistance from the MDC, USDA NRCS, and MU Extension or from professional consulting foresters or certified wildlife biologists.

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