

Forward

For the second year in a row, the spring statewide conference of the Michigan Society of American Foresters focused on interactions between wildlife and forestry practices. At the June 2005 conference in St. Ignace, the Society considered the impacts of white-tailed deer browsing on forest production and biodiversity. This year, we concentrated on why birds are important to foresters and how forestry practices, especially timber harvesting, can be used to improve bird habitat. Ecologically, birds play a critical role in maintaining the health of all forests by reducing defoliators and other insect pests. Socially, family forest owners consistently place wildlife habitat and wildlife viewing near the top of their list of goals. Economically, industrial and public forests are increasingly concerned with biodiversity, including birds, because of forest certification requirements. Contrary to popular belief, timber harvesting often has beneficial effects on bird habitat (see the review by Sallabanks and Arnett cited in the Bibliography). Which species are benefited and for how long depends on the detailed structure and composition of the resulting vegetation.

This conference provided a wealth of information on this topic through five presentations and four field trips. Dave Ewert, of The Nature Conservancy, keynoted the conference by discussing "Bird conservation and forestry in Michigan: The big picture." Kim Hall, of Michigan State University, talked about her research "Linking northern hardwood forest characteristics and songbird distributions in Northern Michigan." Karen Cleveland, of the Michigan DNR, reviewed the history of and current trends in bird conservation in her talk, "Beyond the specific: Michigan's Bird Conservation Initiative and integrated bird conservation." In a related event, the evening banquet included the initial signing ceremony of the Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative. Michigan SAF was among the signatories. Katherine Brashear, of University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, explained her research on "Variation in bird communities among three silvicultural treatments in northern hardwood forests." In the final presentation, Jerry Edde, of the Ottawa National Forest, summarized several studies of "Bird population trends in managed and unmanaged northern hardwood forests."

The second day of the conference was devoted entirely to field trips to a diversity of forest types. Greg Corace, of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, lead a tour of forest restoration efforts in the mixed pine uplands of Seney National Wildlife Refuge. Steve Sjogren, of the Hiawatha National Forest, demonstrated a variety of treatments designed to improve habitat for wildlife, especially Kirtland's warbler, in the xeric conifer communities of the Raco Plains. Kim Hall followed up on her presentation by visiting some of her northern hardwood research sites. Theresa Grattan and Sherry McKinnon, both of the Michigan DNR, lead a tour of various forest types at Tahquamenon Falls State Park.