Why Use Wood?

Is Harvesting "Good" for Wildlife?

Bill Cook, Forester & Biologist

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

Good

Terrible

A Lie

Horrible

YES!

Great

Essential

NO!

Compatible

Needed

Disaster

Bad

Helpful

Inconsistent

Let's explore this apparent absurdity.

550-600

Raising
Display
Shelter
Food
Water
Loafing
Seasonal
Escape
Roosting
Range Size
Migration

Anything that is done

– or not done –

Is good for somebody.


Wildlife?

Feels Good!


Tastes Great!

So, when you say "wildlife" . . .

What is it that you mean?

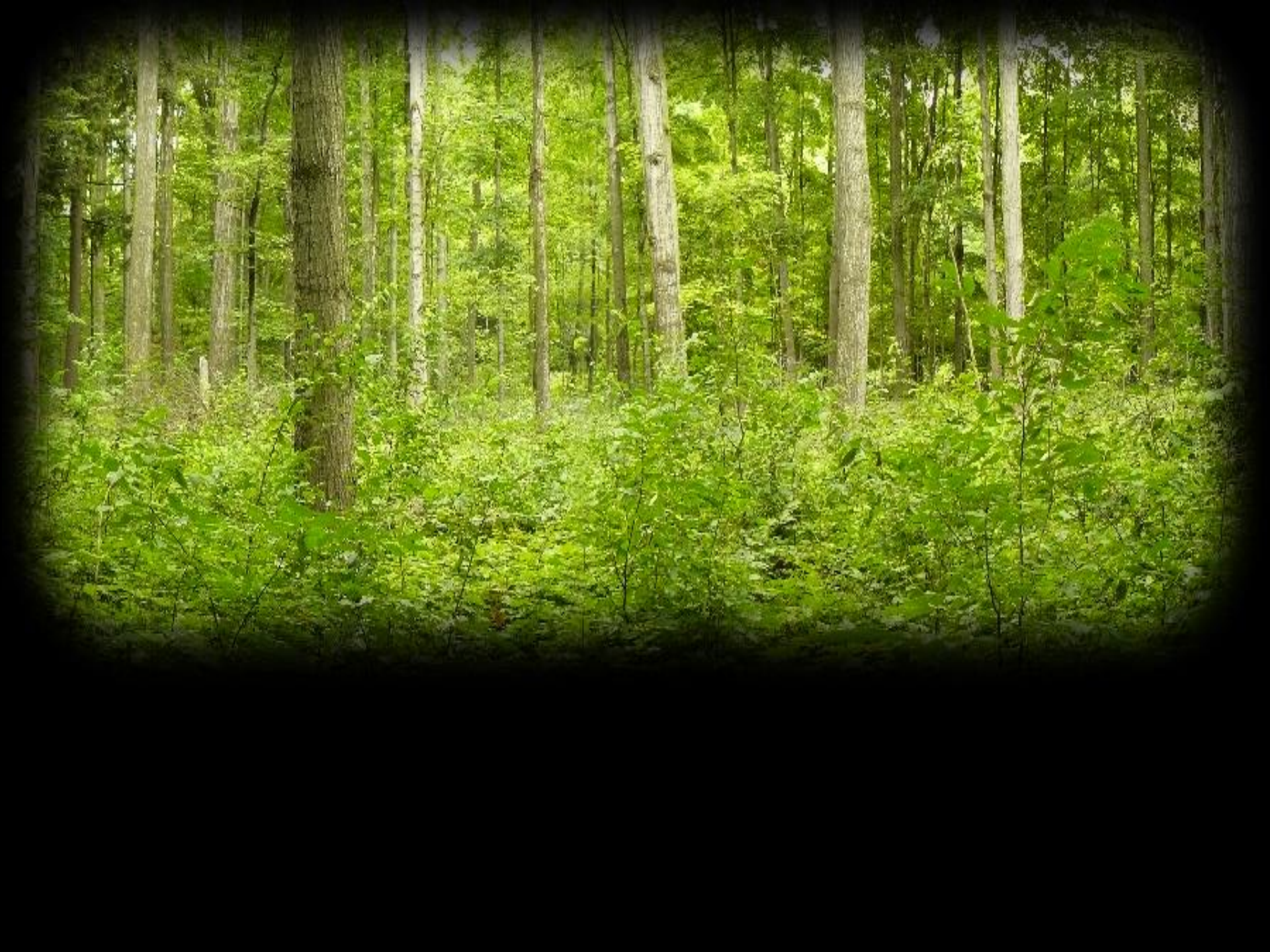
?

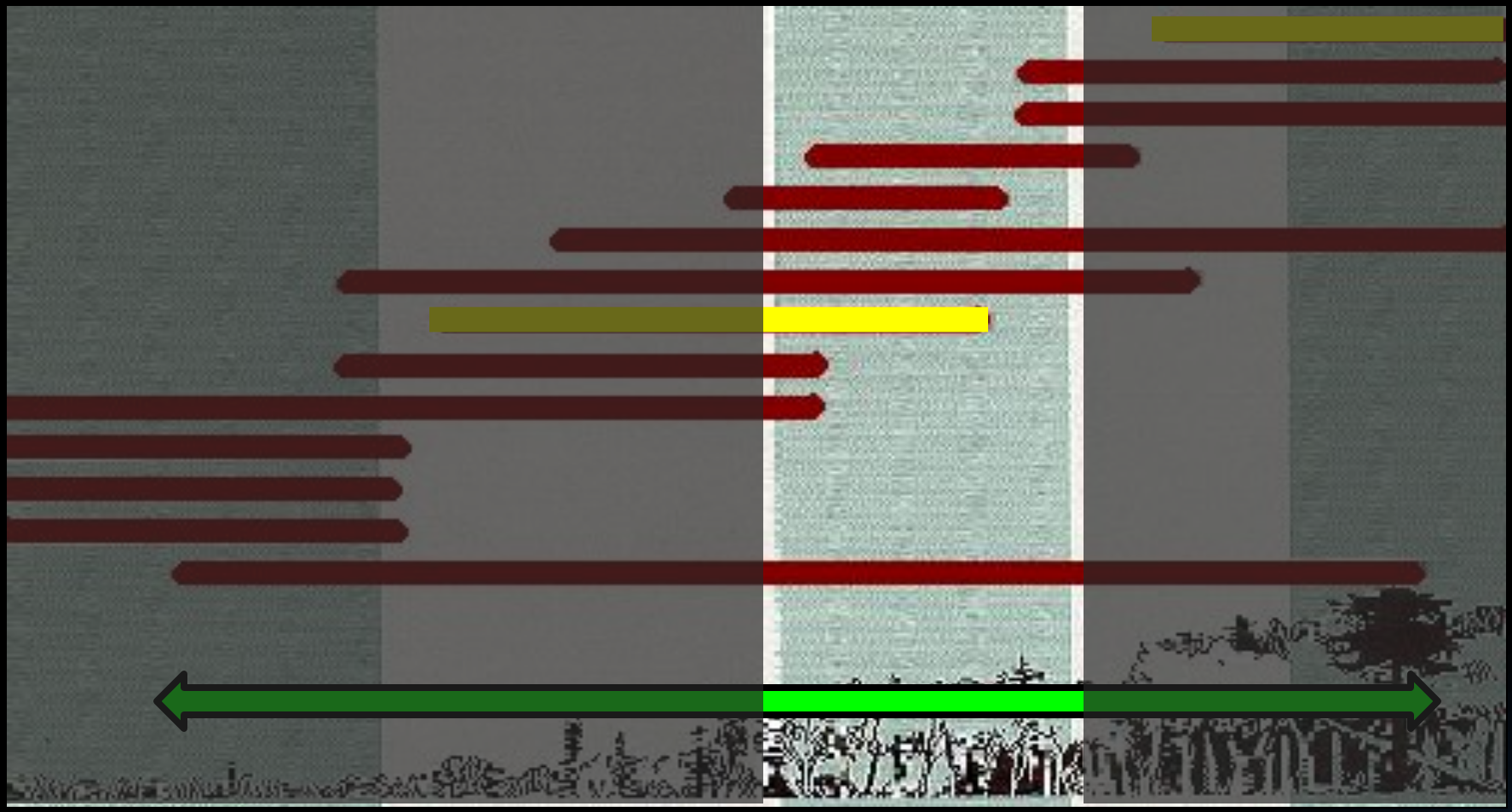
?

"Wildlife" values are matters of perspective.

Diversity of Habitat

Visual quality
is a particularly lousy measure
of forest health and diversity





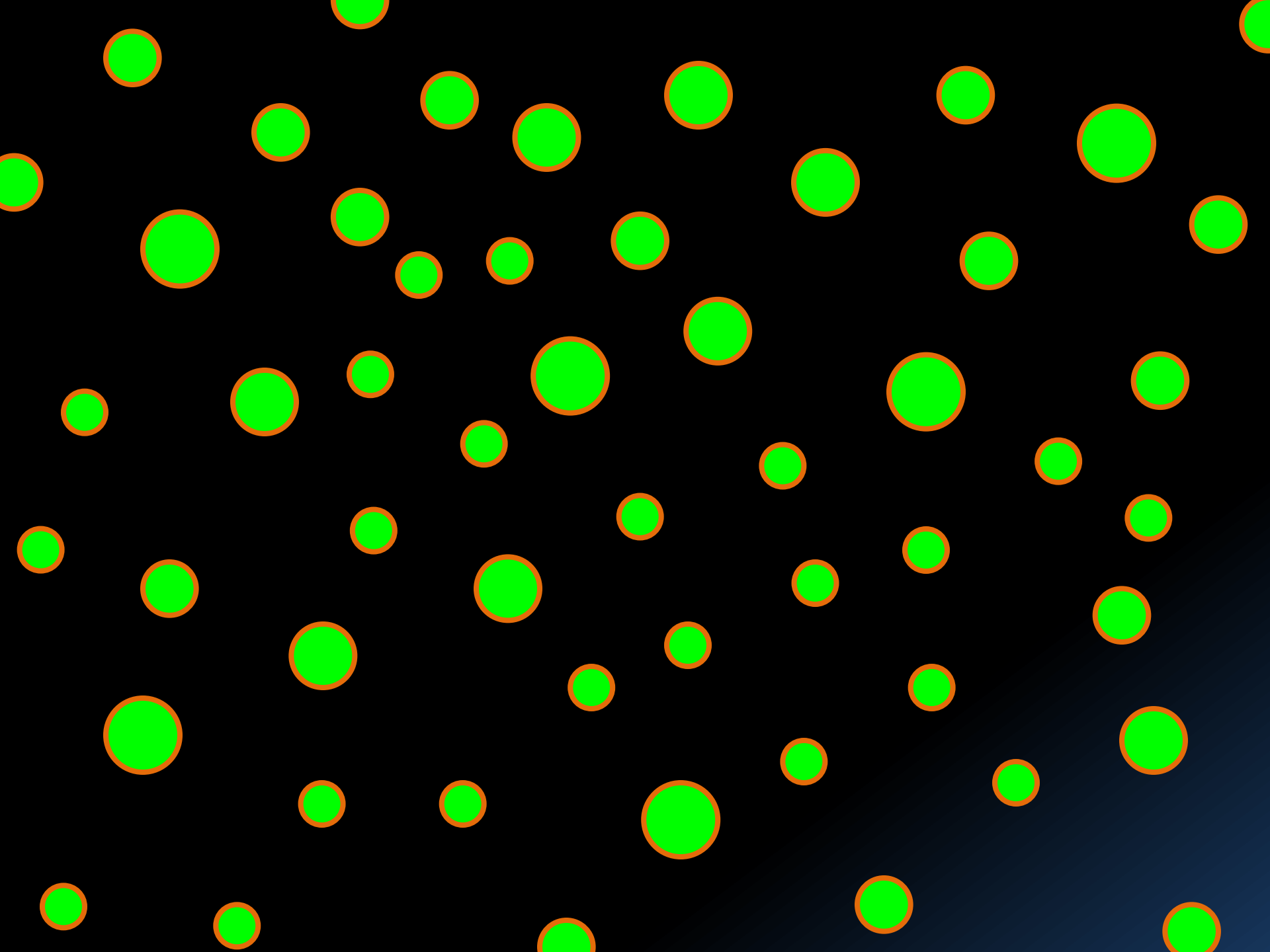
Succession over time - landscape

Scarify

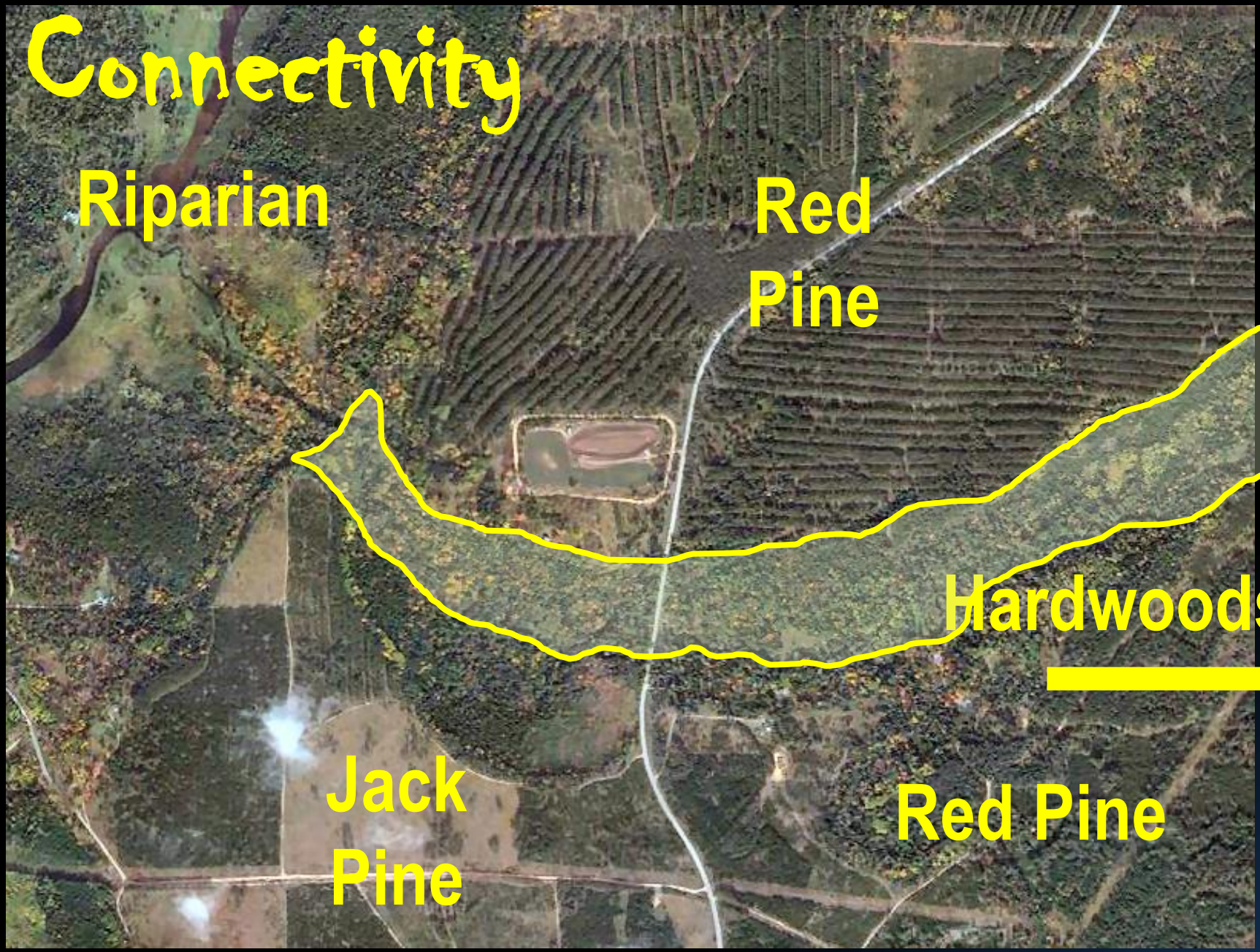
Seasonal Harvest

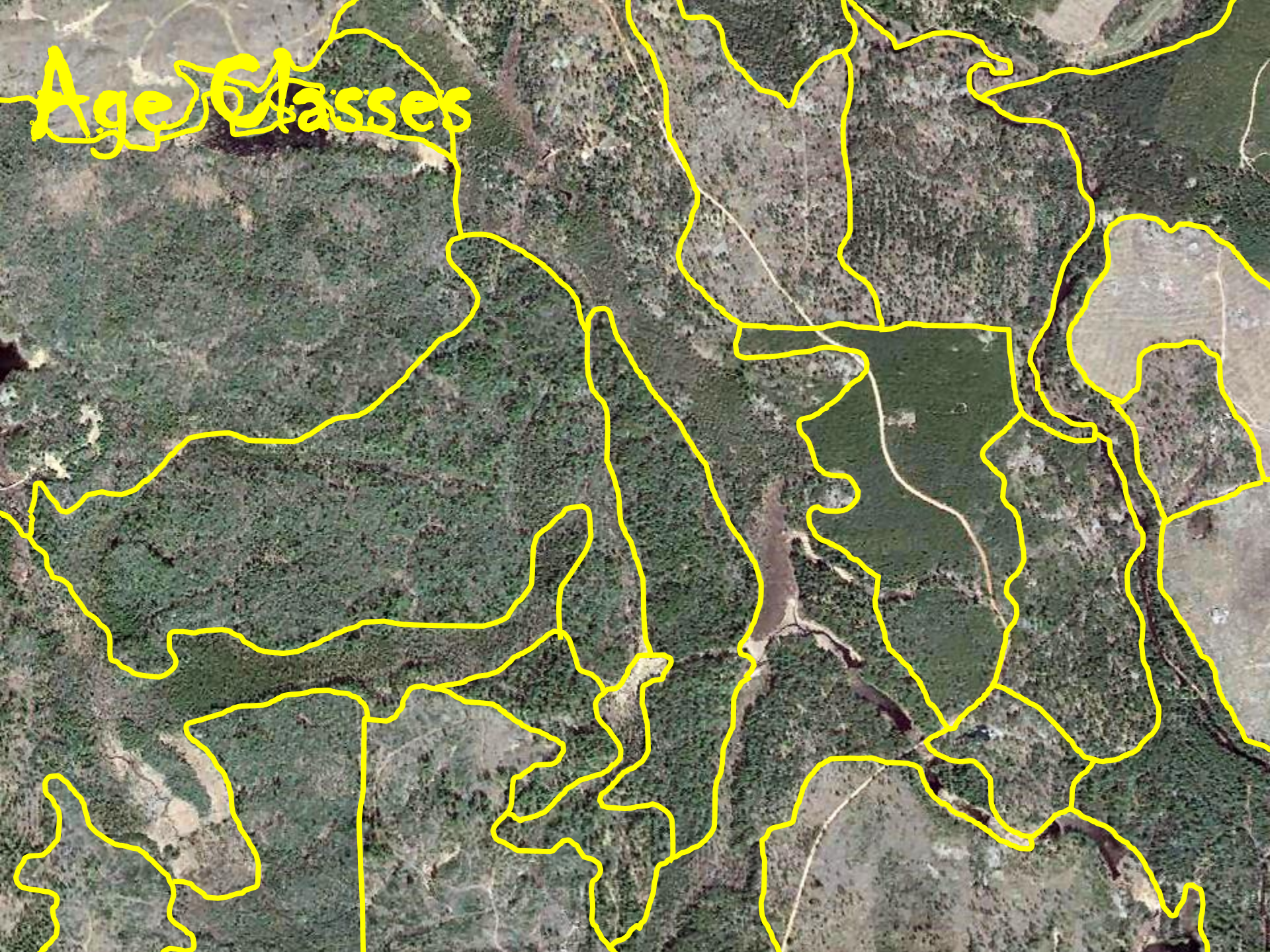
Is there
a choice?


Larger Gap




Leave Slash


Connectivity
Riparian
Red
Pine
Hardwoods
Jack
Pine
Red Pine


Age Classes

Exotic Species Introductions

Loss of hard mast
Loss of canopy
Less winter cover
Stand structure
Successional paths
Failed regeneration


Young Forest Species
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD
BROWN SNAKE
BROWN THRASHER
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD
CHIPPING SPARROW
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW
COMMON NIGHTHAWK
COMMON REDPOLL
COMMON SNIPE
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT
DARK-EYED JUNCO
EASTERN BLUEBIRD
EASTERN COTTONTAIL
EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE
GRASSHOPPER SPARROW
GRAY CATBIRD
INDIGO BUNTING
KIRTLAND'S WARBLER
LEAST SHREW
LINCOLN'S SPARROW
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE
MALLARD
MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE
MEADOW JUMPING MOUSE
MOURNING WARBLER
NORTHERN BOBWHITE
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER
SHARP-TAILED GROUSE
SONG SPARROW
SWAMP SPARROW
TURKEY VULTURE
VESPER SPARROW
WESTERN CHORUS FROG
WHIP-POOR-WILL
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW
WHITE-EYED VIREO
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW
WILLOW FLYCATHER
WILSON'S WARBLER
YELLOW WARBLER
YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

“We are not seeing a large number of diverse species like we saw prior . . .”

- Conservation Biologist
6 April 2014

Conserving Wildlife in Michigan's Harvested Forests

The forests of northern Michigan once again grow quiet as I flip the kill switch on my ATV. I just spent the last 20 minutes of a cold, damp dawn driving down a flooded logging road toward one of my study sites located in Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula. I turn my attention to the young forest stand in front of me and witness a vast thicket of innumerable aspen and thorny blackberry bushes, intermixed with patches of mature white oak and red maple. Most of the aspen here are 10 feet tall: new growth that followed an extensive logging operation five years ago.

[illegible] industry has been an [illegible] northern Michigan's economy for the past [illegible] years and will [illegible] the landscape for the foreseeable [illegible] from northern Michigan [illegible] products including [illegible] now, renewable biofuels. But, [illegible] forest habitat, it has been [illegible] of numerous species [illegible] the impacts of timber [illegible] major concern for resource managers. [illegible] and to enhance the sustainability [illegible] Michigan Department of [illegible] DNR) has adopted new operational standards for timber harvests occurring on state-owned lands. For example, under previous standards, clear-[illegible] with no habitat retention, were common. [illegible] management guidelines require that [illegible]

forest stands (see *Why Study Salamanders and Songbirds?*). Specifically, I determined whether areas with greater structural retention (i.e., more patches of green-trees or coarse woody debris) were used more often by forest-dwelling wildlife than areas with less structural retention. I also investigated how early-successional songbirds respond to structural retention. These species, including many warblers and sparrows, typically require young forest stands with thick understory vegetation. My last project was an in-depth investigation to determine if structural retention reduces red-backed salamander mortality in recently-harvested forest stands during the hot summer months. These salamanders need protective cover to shelter them from desiccating in summer heat, and it is unknown if structural retention can provide adequate microhabitat for reducing mortality. Overall, I hoped to determine if the Michigan DNR's retention guidelines are effective in promoting habitat for songbirds and salamanders following timber harvesting.

[illegible] field crew and I spent the spring and summer from 2009-2011 in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan collecting data on songbirds and salamanders in aspen stands that were harvested between 1-15 years ago. Most study sites were between 20 and 80 acres in size. Over three field seasons, we visited 275 sites with varying degrees of structural retention. During a typical day, we conducted bird surveys in the early morning and salamander surveys in the afternoon. Detecting songbirds in regenerating aspen stands required a well-trained ear and a good pair of binoculars, while detecting salamanders required a strong back and healthy knees for rolling large logs. At some study sites, [illegible] marked salamanders with individual tags [illegible] relate salamander mortality [illegible] retention.

". . . logging . . . has been implicated in the decline of numerous species of wildlife."

Shades of Baloney

"Blah blah blah" is good for wildlife.

Wildlife needs . . .

If it's good for deer . . .

. . . it's good for everything else.

Selection harvest is better for wildlife.

Clearcutting destroys habitat.

Think about what you want on your property. Or, what you would like to see on public forest land.

Then, learn about practices that enhance those objectives.