

New Hampshire's Wildlife And Their Habitats

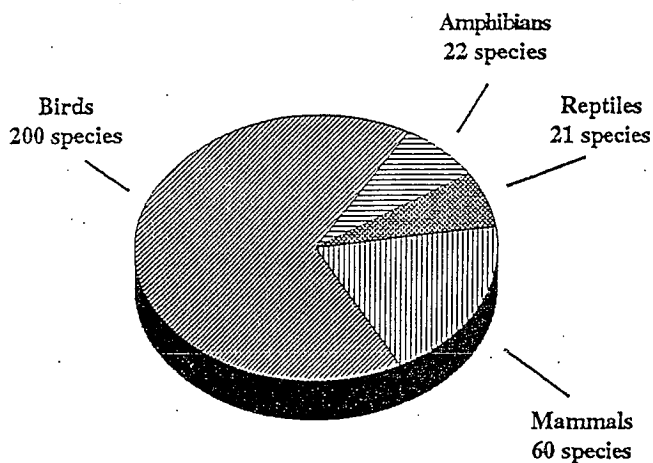
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New Hampshire's Wildlife

When considering New Hampshire's wildlife we are most likely to think of deer or backyard birds such as chickadees. However, New Hampshire provides habitat for more than 300 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.



Habitat requirements vary with each animal species and may include variation with seasons of the year, sex and age of the animal, and home range or territory size. When providing habitat for wildlife, we must account for differences among the various species, and consider what is necessary for both sexes and all life stages within each species.

New Hampshire's Landscape and Wildlife

The landscape features found in New Hampshire are the foundations of the complex interactions of New Hampshire's wildlife species and their habitats. These landscape features include:

- Forests
- Lakes and rivers
- Wetlands
- Agricultural land

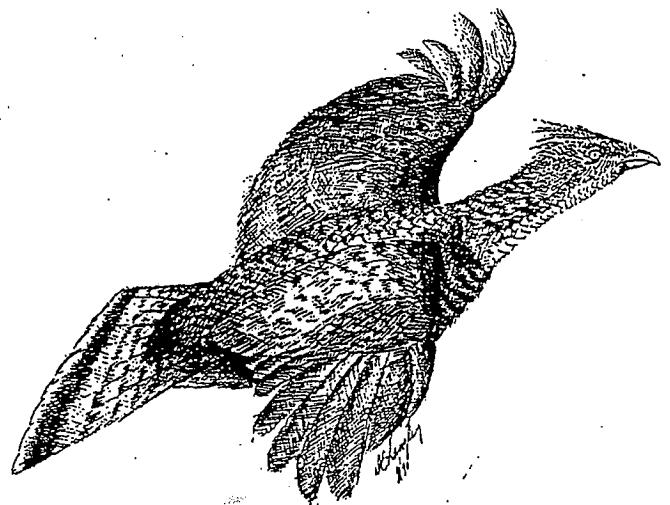
The quantity and types of these features has changed over the years from presettlement days up to the present. Today New Hampshire's most prevalent landscape feature is forest.

What Is Wildlife Habitat?

Habitat is simply the place where an animal lives. While the requirements of individual species vary widely, the habitats of all species provide basic needs:

- food
- water
- cover
- space

The requirement of space relates to the area occupied by an individual, family group, or social group, within which the needs for food, water, and cover can be met. The size of the area is referred to as a territory or home range.



Forests

Our forests are composed of various trees and are classified into two major categories:

- Hardwoods
- Softwoods

New Hampshire's hardwood forests consist of many species of trees. Some examples include:

- Oak
- Beech
- Maple
- Birch

The softwood forests in southern and central parts our state are primarily comprised of:

- Pine and
- Hemlock

and the northern sections are dominated by:

- Spruce and
- Fir



The age of the forest is an important factor for wildlife. Young hardwoods provide browse for deer and moose, and dense nesting cover for certain songbirds. Mature hardwood forests are important food producers for wildlife providing acorns and beech nuts, as well as other seeds and fruits. These same forests provide nesting and feeding sites for many bird species along with denning and foraging sites for mammals and habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

Young softwoods provide cover for animals like snowshoe hare, roost sites for grouse and nesting sites for songbirds. When these trees mature they could provide the protection required by deer to survive harsh winter weather.

As the forest ages trees begin to decay and die providing yet another opportunity for wildlife. Woodpeckers pound out holes for nesting and feeding. Over 40 species of New Hampshire wildlife make use of abandoned woodpecker holes or naturally occurring cavities in trees for nesting, denning and protection from the weather.

The many different forest types and ages in New Hampshire provide for all or part of the habitat needs of many different wildlife species found in the state. Maintaining a balance of forest types and ages is important to the survival and diversity of wildlife in New Hampshire.

Lakes and Rivers

Lakes and rivers support many varieties of fish as well as several well known species of wildlife such as:

- Loons
- Otter
- Ospreys

Wetlands

Wetlands are another vital habitat type for wildlife. There are a wide array of wetland types in New Hampshire all of which have their particular value as wildlife habitat. Some of the general wetland types include:

- Swamps
- Marshes
- Bogs

Swamps are generally characterized by flood tolerant shrub and tree species. Examples include:

- Red Maple
- Speckled alder
- Button bush

Marshes primarily consist of aquatic and emergent plants and some shrubs such as:

- Sedges
- Rushes
- Cattail

Bogs are unique wetland types that support a variety of plant species associated with them, which include:

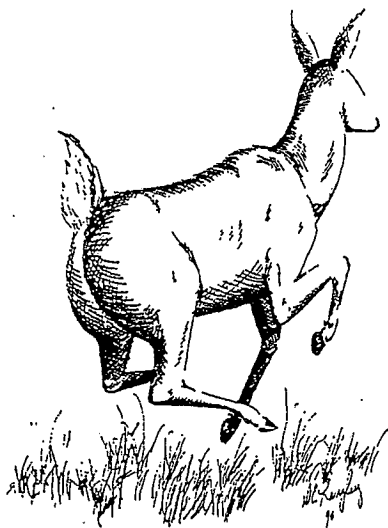
- Pitcher plant
- Sun dew
- Sphagnum moss

Beaver are probably the most well known species associated with wetland areas. Their activity causes changes to the vegetation and characteristics of a wetland area, yet it also creates opportunities for other species. Herons develop nesting colonies in the tops of dead trees in the flooded area. Moose slog through these areas to feed on aquatic vegetation. Muskrats, painted turtles, and bull frog are also found in these areas.

Agricultural land

Agricultural land has diminished in the state since the late 1800's when 40% of New Hampshire was agricultural land. Today, agricultural land comprises only a small portion of the states land base. Nevertheless, these remaining areas provide important habitat for wildlife and consist of:

- Pasture
- Cropland
- Orchards



Bobolinks and meadowlarks find nest in hay fields. Catbirds and mockingbirds nest in the hedgerows between fields. These areas also support cottontail rabbits and meadow voles and are the hunting grounds for red fox and birds of prey.

New Hampshire's People and Wildlife

The best way for us to help wildlife is by becoming familiar with our wildlife and their habitat needs and ensuring that these habitats are available. This can be accomplished by:

- Proper land-use planning
- Responsible forestry and agriculture
- Supporting public and private agencies

Proper land-use planning includes taking natural resource issues into account when proposals are made to change land-uses. Where we choose to build our homes and businesses can have an effect on wildlife habitat and should be considered in land-use planning at all levels from the individual landowner to local, state, and federal boards and agencies.

Responsible forestry and agriculture takes into account the effects that particular activities have upon wildlife resources. Many public and private natural resource professionals are available to assist landowners in developing, planning, and implementing responsible practices that meet the needs of the landowner while providing wildlife habitat. Finally, the support of public and private agencies provides a source of information regarding natural resources and an opportunity to get involved in local conservation issues. Below is a list of the public and private agencies in New Hampshire that are involved with wildlife resources.

Federal Agencies:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service

State Agencies:

- NH Department of Fish and Game
- University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension
- NH Natural Heritage Inventory
- NH Department of Resources and Economic Development
 - Division of Forests and Lands
 - Division of Parks and Recreation
- NH Department of Environmental Services
- NH Office of State Planning

Private Non-profit Organizations:

The Nature Conservancy

Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

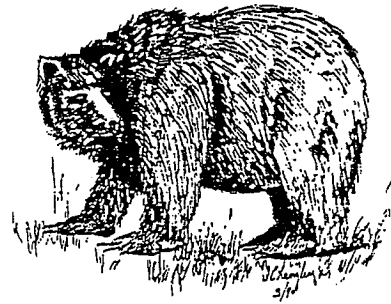
Audubon Society of New Hampshire

NH Wildlife Federation

NH Association of Conservation Commissions

Loon Preservation Committee

Harris Center for Conservation



This is only a partial list of the wildlife conservation agencies and organizations in New Hampshire it is not intended to exclude nor endorse any particular one but only to provide an example of the types of organizations in our state.

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