



Bird-Friendly Forestry

Forestry practices that benefit both landowners and wildlife.

Forest owners can use established silvicultural practices to maximize forest health, productivity, and revenue while also creating valuable bird and wildlife habitat.

Why manage for birds?

- Bird-friendly forestry is wildlife-friendly forestry: managing for bird habitat will also have a beneficial impact on wildlife.
- Birds are indicators of forest health. They are sensitive to changes in habitat quality and are easy to identify and monitor.
- Results in healthy, attractive, well-managed forestland.

Threats to Healthy Bird Populations

- Fragmentation: Land conversion breaks up contiguous stretches of forest, leaving only small patches or “islands” as habitat for birds and wildlife.
- Passive forest management: Choosing not to actively manage your forest can lead to a decline in forest health and habitat quality.

Active forest management is essential to conserving the diverse habitat conditions wildlife and bird species need to survive.

Habitat for the Birds

- Forest Edge: The transition zone where different habitat types meet (ex. the transition from a field to a timber stand) which creates a new habitat type. A gradual transition between cover types can cater to a variety of habitat needs by promoting diverse vegetation composition.
- Snags: Standing dead or dying trees are preferred by cavity nesting birds. They can also provide insect forage and perch locations. Leaving standing dead vegetation is important to a variety of bird and wildlife species.
- Mature forest: A forest that maintains 90% canopy cover and has a variety of species in different age, diameter, and height classes. Mature forests are rare in the southeast, but typically provide habitat needed by forest interior birds.
- Early successional forests: Young forests that are dominated by grasses, legumes, wildflowers, and shrubs, typically following a major disturbance. This “thicket” provides predator protection, nesting, and foraging opportunities for wildlife.

Silviculture Methods for Bird-Friendly Forestry

Commonly practiced forest activities that support the growth of various forest types (silviculture) can be applied to create bird habitat. Bottomland, hardwood, and pine stands can both be actively managed to produce revenue while maintaining their wildlife benefit. Many of these strategies target getting sun on the forest floor and diversifying forest qualities, such as age, structure, and species, over the landscape.

<u>Method</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Benefit to Birds</u>	<u>Birds that Benefit</u>
Group Select Harvest with Feathered Edges	Small groups or patches of trees (2-10ac) are harvested, creating gaps in the canopy and mimicking natural disturbances.	Creates areas of young forest and different-aged trees. Forest interior birds will still remain at the site.	American Woodcock, Yellow-breasted Chat, Prairie Warbler, Summer Tanager
Thinning	Removal of trees throughout a stand to reduce density and competition. Maintain 60%+ crown cover post thinning.	Allows sunlight to reach the floor, promoting diverse understory plants and grasses.	Pine Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Brown-headed Nuthatch
Prescribed Fire	Strategic burning of thinned or open forest stands in 2-4 year rotations removes understory debris and vegetation.	Mimics natural fire cycles and promotes understory regeneration leading to insects and seed production.	Northern Bobwhite, Bachman's Sparrow, Eastern Wild Turkey, Red-cockaded Woodpecker
Natural Regeneration	Re-stocking forest stands though established, on-site seed sources rather than manually planting.	Creates a diversity of tree height and age throughout the stand.	Pine Warbler, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee
Wide Row Planting	Planting timber at wider spacing (10ft x 10ft or wider) during timber stand establishment.	Allows sunlight to reach the floor, promoting diverse understory plants and grasses.	Pine Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Northern Bobwhite
Mid-rotation Release	Removing undesirable competition in the middle of a stand's rotation by mechanical or herbicide treatment.	When followed by fire, encourages the growth of herbaceous understory (native grasses and forbes).	Eastern Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Chuck-will's-Widow, Eastern Wood-Pewee
Invasive Species Control	Targeted herbicide or mechanical removal of non-native species.	Supports native insect populations important for bird diets.	ALL native birds
Closed-canopy retention in hardwoods	90% of the tract remains with closed canopy.	Regulates temperature and humidity, nesting habitat.	Wood Thrush, Hooded Warbler

Indigo Bunting



PHOTO: TEDD GREENWALD

Prairie Warbler



PHOTO: CAMERON DARNELL

Summer Tanager



PHOTO: MEGUMI AITA

Wild Turkey



PHOTO: MARK MITCHELL

Carolina Chickadee



PHOTO: SAMANTHA MICHAEL

Bird-friendly Forestry BINGO

See if you can get BINGO by implementing these commonly practiced silviculture methods on your property to create bird habitat.

Retain Snags	Preserve Forest Interiors	Prescribed Burn	Wide-row Planting	Thin
Manage for Species Diversity	Feather Edges between Habitats	Leave a Buffer Along Streams and Wetlands	Control Invasive Plants	Follow SC's BMPs during Harvests
Harvest Outside of Bird Breeding Season	Control Invasive Wildlife (ex. Hogs)	FREE	Minimize Forest Fragmentation	Manage for Uneven-aged Forests
Preserve or Restore Wetlands	Allow Natural Regeneration	Diversity of Forest Types	Control Undesireable Woody Understory	Retain Downed Dead Debris
Group Select Harvest	Preserve Riparian Zones	Keep Forestland Forested	Avoid Large-scale Clearcuts	Promote Native Vegetation

BINGO Glossary

Thinning: Removal of trees in a stand to reduce density and competition

Group Select Harvest: Small groups/patches of trees are harvested, creating gaps that mimic natural disturbance

Prescribed Fire: A planned fire used to meet management objectives

Wide-row Planting: Planting timber at wider spaces during stand establishment

SC's Best Management Practices (BMPs): Guidelines for protecting water quality during harvests

Natural Regeneration: Re-stocking stands via established, on-site seed sources rather than planting

Uneven-aged Forest Management: Maintaining at least three different age classes within a managed stand

Riparian Zones: Transition area between land and a water body (ex. creeks, rivers)

Visit ASC's
Working Lands
website.

