



YOUNG FOREST HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

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What is “young forest habitat?”

Ecological Succession: an orderly progression of changes in community composition from the initial development of vegetation to the establishment of a climax community

- Grasses and forbs →
- Vines and shrubs →
- Saplings/pioneer tree species →
- Pole-stage →
- Climax community/Mature forest

What is “young forest habitat?”

In the real world of habitat management, we can get to the young forest stage via two ways.

- Abandoned/fallow farm fields
- Setting back succession in forested habitat (cutting/timber harvest, natural events like fire and tornadoes)











What does young forest habitat offer?

FOOD AND COVER!



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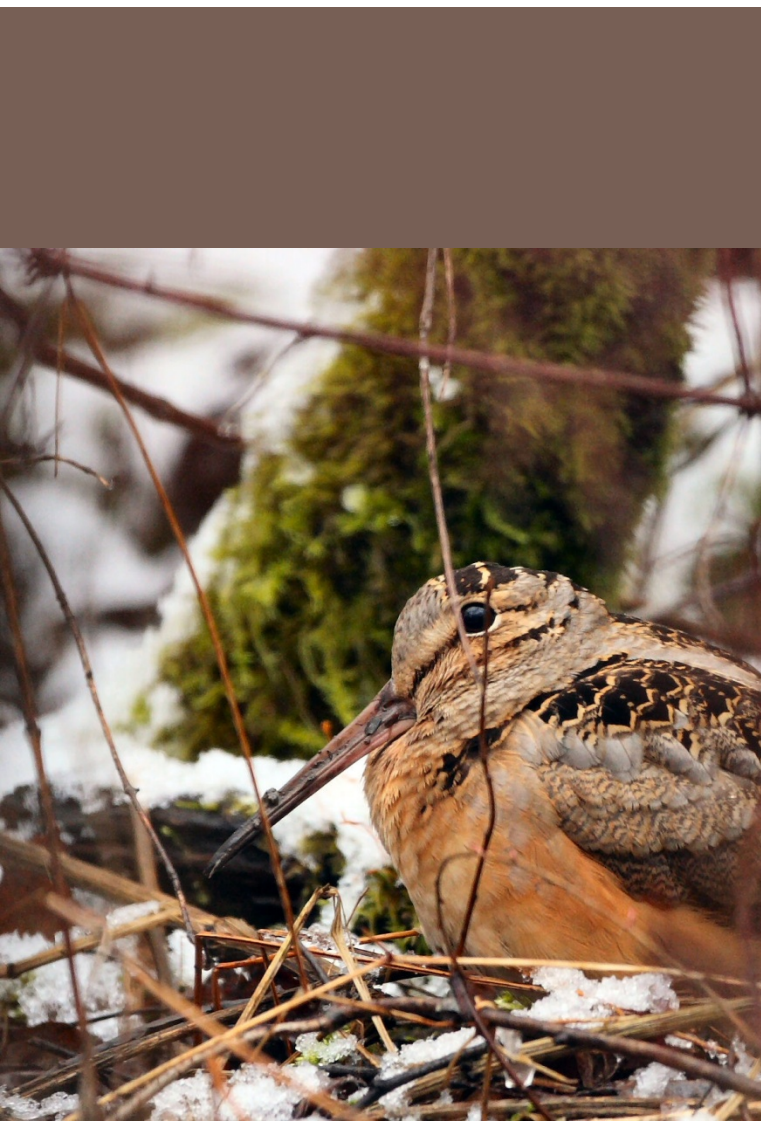
Wildlife in young forest habitat



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Declines in young forest wildlife

- 89 young forest species (birds, mammals, reptiles) experienced significant declines in the past century
- Young forest birds are especially at risk in the Northeast US



Why are early successional specialists declining?

- Loss of habitat to development
- Habitats maturing to forest and not getting replaced
- Fear of cutting/harvesting trees



PA has 50% less young forest habitat today than it had in 1960.



Young forest habitat is EPHEMERAL.

Continued management is required to maintain this habitat on the landscape.

How can we create more young forest habitat?

- Harvest Timber
- Noncommercial clear cuts and thinning
- Control invasive species to allow for native species to grow
- Managing abandoned farmland and reclaimed strip mines
- Use of prescribed fire to achieve specific habitat results*



Timber Harvests

- ❑ Don't be fooled into thinking that “select” or “diameter-limit” cuts are good for wildlife.
- ❑ “Clear cut” is not a four letter word. Residual trees for birds = crop trees for you.
- ❑ (Shelterwoods, group-tree, and single-tree selection can also be good choices for wildlife.)
- ❑ Hire a professional forester and follow his advice.

Noncommercial cuts

- Can be used to create wildlife habitat while improving the future stand. (It's a “do-over.”)
- Again, residuals = crop trees.
- Many methods, depending on size of trees, accessibility, finances and manpower. (Chainsaw, Hydro Ax)
- Possibility of selling pulpwood or firewood

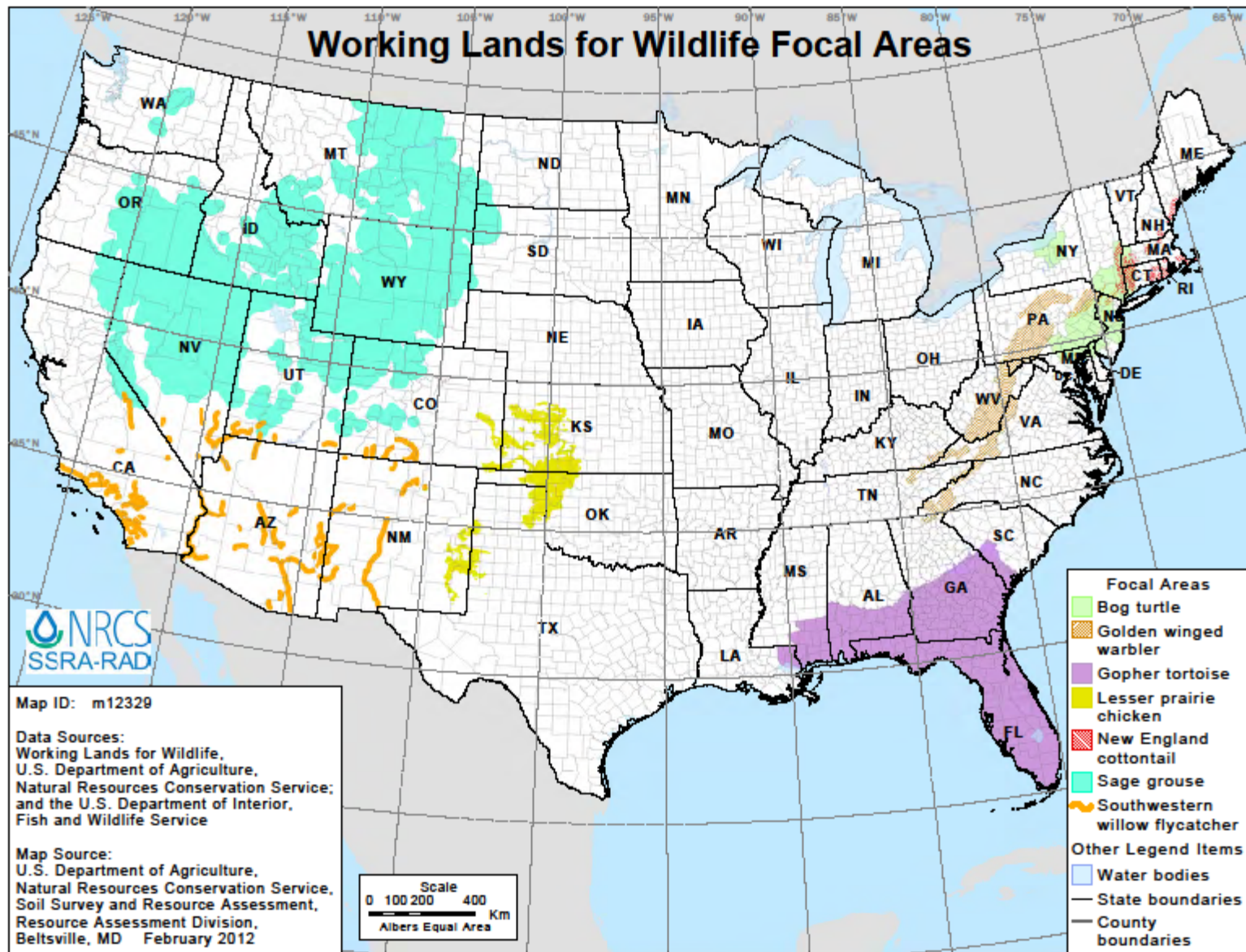




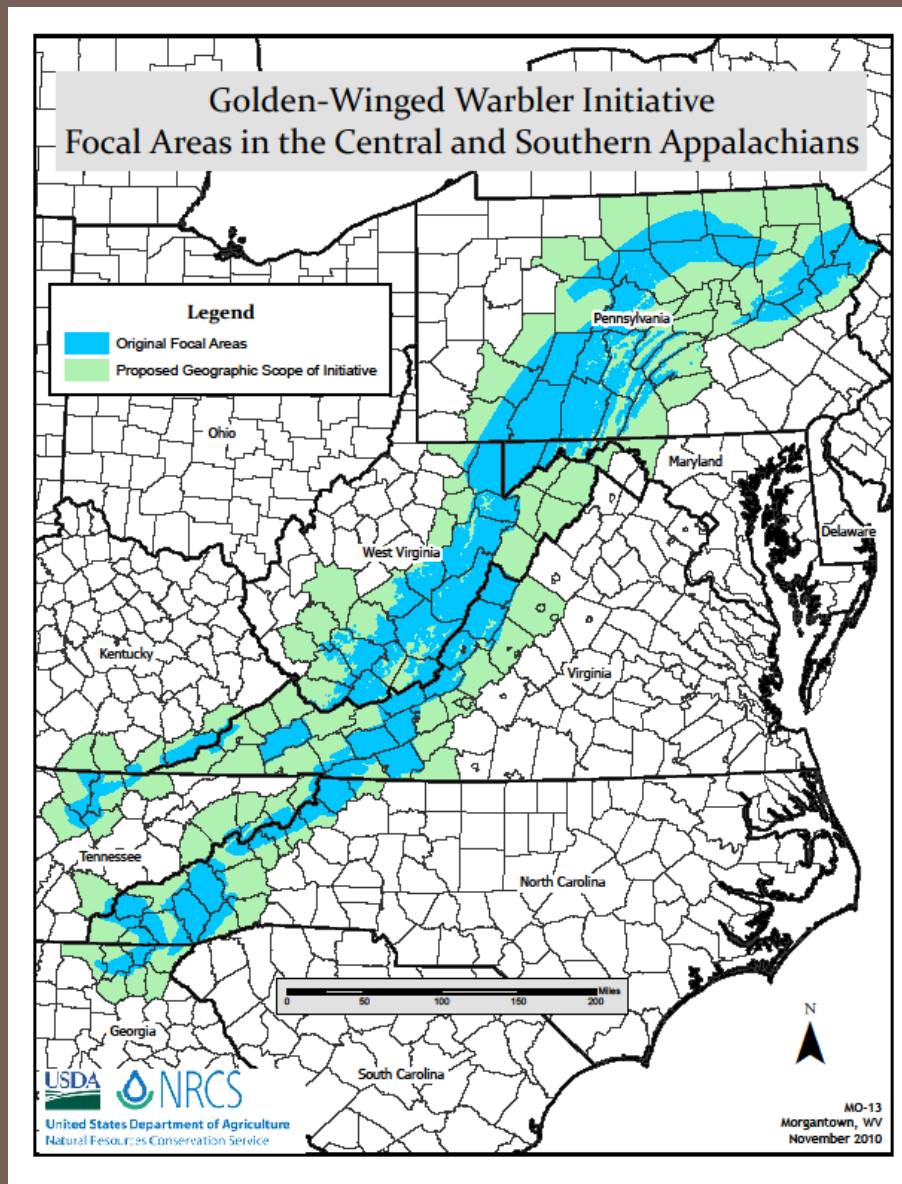


What help is there for you to create young forest habitat?

- ❑ PGC Private Landowner Assistance Program
- ❑ DCNR Service Forester
- ❑ USDA NRCS Farm Bill: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) riparian and wetland buffers
- ❑ USDA NRCS Farm Bill: Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- ❑ USDA NRCS Farm Bill: Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) Working Lands for Wildlife



Working Lands for Wildlife



Golden-winged warbler BMPs

- Why manage specifically for this bird?
- How do we know it's specific habitat needs, and what are they?
 - Leave 10-20 residual trees per acre, scattered throughout or in small islands
 - Residuals should be 9" or greater dbh
 - Residuals should include white oak, cherries, black locust
 - Clear cut areas should have an irregular shape to maximize edge





WHIP and EQIP

- ❑ Simple application available from your local NRCS office OR online (search for USDA Farm Bill Programs)
- ❑ Eligible practices for young forest habitat include border edge cut, clear cutting (with 10-20 residuals per acre), maintenance of existing young forest habitat, invasive species management not limited to exotic species

Private Landowner Assistance Program



For more information:

Young Forest Habitat

- www.youngforest.org
- www.timberdoodle.org
- www.NewEnglandCottontail.org
- www.gwwa.org

For programs and applications:

- www.pgc.state.pa.us
- www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov

