



VERMONT

Audubon Vermont's Technical Assistance for Private Landowners (Forests) Eligibility Criteria

We suggest landowners review these criteria in collaboration with their forester

Questions? Email: tim.duclos@audubon.org

At Audubon Vermont, we support forest landowners and their consulting foresters who are interested in enhancing habitat for birds and wildlife through bird-friendly forest management practices. Our program helps landowners and foresters apply conservation strategies tailored to their forests' unique needs, which may involve active restoration or, in some cases, a more passive approach. *We offer these services at no cost.*

To ensure we make the greatest impact with our existing capacity, we focus on working with landowners, foresters, and properties that meet the following criteria:

1. A Strong Opportunity for Conservation Impact

We prioritize projects where our expertise can help landowners and their foresters achieve meaningful conservation outcomes, *particularly where bird-friendly practices might not have been considered or implemented yet* (see below for more information on these practices). We also prioritize properties that are 25 acres or larger (aligned with Vermont's Current Use/Use Value Appraisal program).

2. Intentionality

We work with landowners and their foresters who have *enduring intentions* towards actively supporting the ecological health of their forests. Active forest management may be an appropriate strategy for some properties, while others may benefit more from a passive, hands-off approach. Our goal is to work with landowners and foresters to support the best strategy for ecological health, based on the specific needs of their unique forest.

To help you assess the degree to which your current forest management plan aligns with bird-friendly practices, we encourage you to work with your forester to review the following list of key planning elements. These are aspects to consider when evaluating your plan's alignment with bird-friendly forestry:

Bird-Friendly Management Plan Checklist

Check if your management plan includes these bird-friendly elements:

- States goals of improved habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including forest bird species.
- Retention of important habitat features (e.g., standing dead trees (snags), downed wood)
- Promoting a diverse age structure and species composition in the forest
- Incorporation of young forest and, if applicable, open habitat (e.g., meadows, forest edges)

- Strategies for improved forest resilience to climate change (e.g., diverse species, varied forest structures)
- Active or passive management techniques to create or maintain suitable habitat

Forester Checklist for Bird-Friendly Management

Once you've reviewed the elements above, we recommend *working with your forester* to evaluate whether your management plan includes the following more technical aspects related to vertical structural diversity, habitat quality, and landscape context:

- Consideration of how the property fits into the surrounding landscape and broader conservation goals, such as Vermont Conservation Design elements (forest block status, habitat connectivity, amount of young forest and old forest, etc).
- Vertical structural diversity – assessment of overstory, midstory, and understory complexity of stands
- Native species diversity (at all canopy layers) of stands
- Invasive species: presence, severity, impacts, and management options
- Quality of regeneration and challenges to successful regeneration
- Abundance of snags and cavity trees per acre, including those >12" and >18" DBH
- Abundance of large diameter trees (hardwoods >24" and softwoods >20" DBH) per acre
- Abundance of coarse (>4" diameter and >3' long) and fine downed woody material
- Presence of softwood inclusions within predominantly hardwood stands
- Quality/depth of leaf litter
- Presence of soft and hard mast producing species
- Presence of unique habitat features (streams, forested wetlands, etc.) and measures to protect these features during management

If your forester determines that some or all of these elements are not currently included in your plan, we can help with suggestions and strategies to enhance habitat quality and support your forest's long-term health and resilience.

If you're a landowner or forester interested in learning how forest management can benefit both your land and wildlife, we encourage you to reach out. We'd be happy to discuss opportunities for collaboration and conservation impact.

Contact Us: tim.duclos@audubon.org

