

Wildlife Management Opportunities for Northern Landowners

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Sentiment and good intentions won't produce game, but forestry and game management practices will. There's no copyright on good methods, so help yourself—here's how!

In the northern lake region of Wisconsin, recreation is our chief economic interest. Here development of land with special consideration for wildlife is a desirable objective.

Too often landowners maintain their property in blocks of large timber. Bird feeders are placed to attract song birds and "no hunting" signs ring the boundary. Will this induce a variety of wildlife to use the area? *Not until the habitat contains the more basic needs of the desired wildlife species.* Stands of well-spaced towering pines may be pleasing to the eye, but they provide scant food and shelter for wildlife.

OUR IMPORTANT wildlife species in northern Wisconsin are not animals of the deep forest. Both deer and ruffed grouse thrive best in the "in between" zone where forests and grassland merge. This "edge" brings together the needs of wildlife such as food and cover and forms a usable habitat unit. More habitat units (or acres of edge) mean more wildlife per acre.

But what of the other values of the forest? The primary objective may still be the production of wood products. Multiple-use land management is the key to well developed resort properties, wood lots, and hunting lands. This means applying forest and wildlife management techniques to gain from the land a varied crop, wood products, wildlife and most important, a landscape of natural beauty.

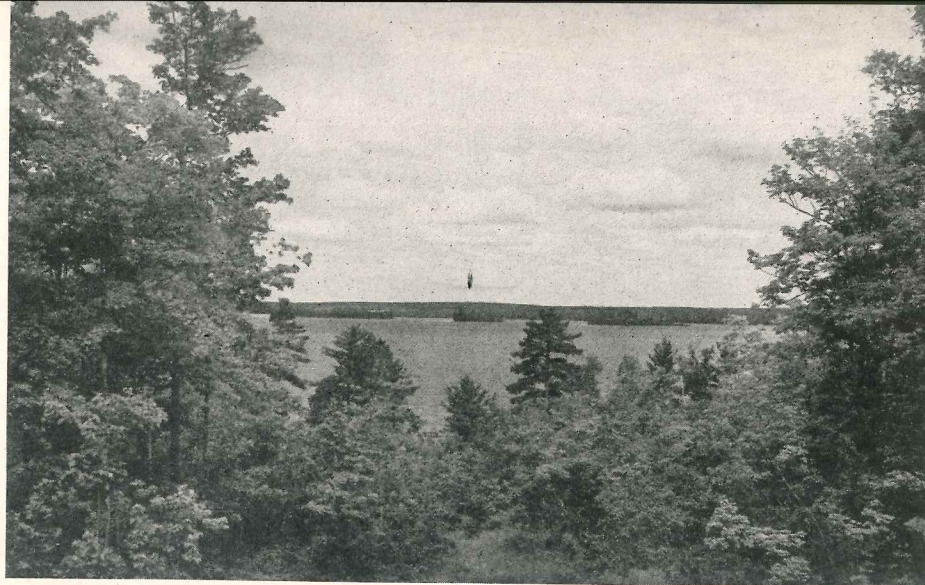
Before going into a multiple-use management program, the resource should be inventoried. Take a good look at the

land as it is. Preparation of a sketch map showing the various forest types will be helpful. On the map locate openings, berry patches, mast producing trees and other items of special interest to wildlife. Investigation of the wildlife part of the resource should be made at the same time. List those species present on your land or in the immediate vicinity. Then decide to benefit those best adapted to your land. Now you are ready to begin improving the habitat. But how?

IN RECENT YEARS, game managers and foresters have been developing methods for improving wildlife conditions on public forest lands. Proven wildlife management practices are merged with forest management practices to provide one management plan. With close cooperation the foresters and the game manager are rapidly bringing our public forest lands into good multiple use. Fortunately most of these management techniques are well adapted for use by the private landowner and may be used economically during slack work periods.

A logical first step for the landowner is to put in effect a timber cutting plan. Intensive harvest of merchantable pulp and sawlogs will do the most for the least cost. If volume is sufficient a logger will do the cutting for you. Planned timber sales on your property can improve the wildlife habitat and give you a monetary return on your investment.

It's good business to get those over-mature trees out of the stand; they may fall in the next blow. The removal of



Good wildlife habitat, this. There's an opening in the woods, a shrub zone, and larger trees.

scattered large trees allows more sunlight to reach the forest floor. The new sprouts and seedlings which follow assure future forest cover and provide succulent food for browsing animals.

Lacking merchantable timber, much

Let's face it: Whatever attraction this over-mature timber may hold, it's poor wildlife habitat. Most species of animals find little food or concealment here.



can be done in younger stands. Thinning of crowded, even-aged stands of pole-size trees is another useful technique. Thinning increases the rate of growth of remaining trees, thereby hastening the time of harvest. Sprouts from stumps in the thinned area will provide food for deer and rabbits for three to five years.

A thinning operation can help to convert an even-aged stand to a more uneven-aged stand. Also it provides a means of timber stand improvement by weeding out poor individual trees and leaving the better specimens more room to grow. If you aim towards a forest composed of many species of many age classes you best fill the need of wildlife.

If possible the cutting should be done during the winter months. Deer browse heavily on the tops of trees felled in the winter. The degree of use will depend on the proximity to a yarding area. Without winter logging, our northern Wisconsin deer range would support only a fraction of the present herd.

Fruit and mast producing trees should be encouraged. Oaks, cherry, and Juneberry produce food for deer, bear, ruffed grouse and a host of song birds. Thinning around these fruit and mast pro-

ducers to give them more light will improve the yield.

Good wildlife habitat requires some area in shrubs and grasses. Many small openings, one-fourth to one acre in size, are better than a few large ones. If openings are absent they can be created by clear-cutting small patches of timber. Paint the stumps with one of the new brush killing chemicals to prevent sprouting.

Patches of conifer cover are important to many species of wildlife. If planting is necessary, spread it out over a period of five to 10 years. Again the aim is towards an uneven-aged stand. Planting in small blocks decreases the fire and insect hazard and provides more "edge" for wildlife.

Excellent grouse cover can be developed by spot-planting conifers in aspen, birch and other hardwood types. White spruce is the best species for this purpose as the lower branches drop, forming cover close to the ground.

Ordinary game habitat can be sweetened by the addition of a food patch, especially in forest areas where farms are few and far between. Plant a mixture of small grains and legumes to provide seeds as well as pasture. Deer, grouse and a variety of song birds will

use the food patch. Cleared strips around plantations can serve as fire-breaks as well as food patches.

For several years we have been seeding logging roads and skid trails on public lands following the completion of timber sales. Mixtures of clover and grasses such as rye grass and millet are broadcast seeded in spring and early summer. Again we have a double-barreled management tool. The plantings keep the roads in grass sod, thereby preventing reversion to trees. The growth of grasses and clover on these roads is very attractive to deer and ruffed grouse in late summer and fall. Old trails and roads should be scratched with a drag or harrow before planting. A weighted plank with spikes, pulled behind a jeep or truck, will do if other equipment is not available.

This is a beginning; as you work with the land and become intimate with its behavior you will get many more ideas for improvements.

How much is it worth to you to see a brood of ruffed grouse catching grasshoppers, or deer grazing in your food patch? Dollars alone won't buy either. By practicing multiple-use management you can harvest forest products and game and still enjoy a "living" forest.

