An Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership Success Story

Habitat Conservation Grants for Migratory Birds of the Upper Mississippi

The Challenge

The Upper Mississippi River system and the adjoining watershed provide critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and songbirds. It is estimated that 40 percent of all North American waterfowl and 60 percent of all North American bird species use the Mississippi River flyway. The forest cover is diverse ranging from flood plain forests, to oak savannah remnants, to central hardwoods. Forests associated with the Upper Mississippi River watershed are experiencing the same pressures as forests throughout the country: fragmentation, forest land conversion, and overall decline in quality due to a simple lack of long-term planning and management.

The Solution

Ten grants were awarded addressing bird habitat conservation needs in the Upper Mississippi watershed. The projects ranged from surveying forested areas as potential Important Bird Areas to landowner workshops on "Bird Friendly Forest Management."

Resulting Benefits

Many partners worked together to conduct 41 workshops on bird friendly forest management reaching 1,228 individuals and 52 natural resource professionals. Invasive species control was carried out on 788 acres; 578 acres were thinned, pruned, or harvested; and trees were planted on 67 acres.

Bird surveys before and after invasives species control and thinning of an oak savannah found ten new species and an increase in bird sightings from 162 to 227

Birds who prefer larger forest blocks for nesting will be attracted to this Minnesota forest as the planting matures and "closes the gap.'

In one "close the canopy" project 150 trees were planted and native shrub and subcanopy seeds were sown. A biologist conducting a bird survey found 29 species, including four species of interest. More importantly all species were forest birds underscoring the importance of restoring the forest canopy on this site.

Sharing Success

These projects will continue to bear fruit. A reprint of *A Bird's Eye View: A Guide to Managing and Protecting Your Land for Neotropical Migratory Birds in the Upper Mississippi River Blufflands* will continue to teach landowners how what they do on their land impacts its use as bird habitat. The Driftless Area Initiative's "Bird Habitat Committee," consisting of 48 forestry and bird professionals, will utilize their regional GIS analysis of private forest lands adjacent to large forest patches to target their work. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Driftless Area Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited will make regional cooperation easier.

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
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April 2007

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