

Nova Scotia Woodcock Habitat Enhancement

Project Number 1.2.1.e

Final Project Report to Wildlife Habitat Canada
(WHC)
For fiscal year 2006/2007

Prepared by:
Woodcock Conservation Society
Bob Stewart, Chair
152 MacKay Siding Road, RR 2
Stewiacke, NS B0N 2J0
902-639-2909

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NOVA SCOTIA WOODCOCK HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

(WHC Grant #1.2.1.e)

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: Alder covers have moist, rich soils with plenty of earthworms and dense overhead cover. Invading trees will begin to replace alders in less than 30 years. By creating newly rejuvenated alder covers, we will improve woodcock feeding habitat and provide temporary singing grounds which also serve as good brood and nesting habitat. Periodic rejuvenation of alder feeding habitat is essential for woodcock in Nova Scotia.

Need: Woodcock populations in Nova Scotia probably peaked around the 1950-1960's after large scale farmland abandonment during the 1940's. Old farms growing back to forest make ideal woodcock feeding habitat. As abandoned farmlands grew back into alders, a lot of great woodcock feeding habitat became available.

Unfortunately, in Nova Scotia the peak of farm abandonment has passed. Much of the alder growth on these lands has become too old for woodcock and other wildlife that require a young, diverse, vigorously growing habitat.

Today, the combination of forest succession, loss and alteration of feeding habitat has contributed to the decline of the woodcock. This trend is true in Nova Scotia which once had far more feeding habitat than it does today. There will never be as much feeding habitat available in the future as there was in the past.

Alder growth provides excellent feeding habitat for woodcock, and also provides drumming, brood and year round habitat for ruffed grouse. Alders growing on fertile, moist soil with plenty of earthworms make favourite woodcock feeding habitat.

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- a) To improve woodcock feeding habitat by periodic rejuvenation of over mature alder cover;
- b) To establish temporary singing grounds which also serve as good brood and nesting habitat; and
- c) To establish a "spring singing" survey on project sites.

3.0 PARTNERS

- Ledwidge Lumber Ltd. and the Province of Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources - providing the land for this project on a voluntary basis.
- Wildlife Habitat Canada - providing funding for the project.
- The Woodcock Conservation Society - providing management for this project, with in-kind donations, volunteer services and financial contributions.

4.0 ACTIVITIES & RESULTS

The WCS conducted a spring Woodcock Singing Survey on the project sites in May 2006. This initial Spring Singing Survey established a baseline of the number of males present in May 2006, and as the project continues, will reveal the presence of the increased numbers of woodcock. The Survey will continue for the duration of the Project and the results recorded and shared with the Canadian Wildlife Services (CWS) to assist them in their continuing woodcock preservation work.

In September 2006, the two project sites (i.e. Dept of Natural Resources site at Chaswood and the Ledwidge property site at Lake Egmont - see project site maps in Appendix 7.1) were flagged in preparation for the work. In January, 2007 a forestry company commenced work clear cutting a series of strips in the overmature alder growth with a brush mower (e.g. when the alders were dormant). Unseasonably warm weather in Fall 2006 mandated postponing the project until January 2007 when the ground was frozen and the work could be conducted without damaging the land.

The Contractor was able to perform the work on the two sites in twenty hours, with four hours for moving equipment to the site(s).

The WCS will record the spring singing results. These will be shared with the CWS and other conservation organizations.

Habitat Conservation Achievements/benefits:

By the example of this co-operation between WHC, private landowners and the WCS, other groups and agencies will be inspired and encouraged to follow our lead and establish other wildlife habitat projects.

These sites, provided by the Landowners, Ledwidge Lumber Limited and the Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Natural Resources, will yield 28 acres of rejuvenated habitat for woodcock and other species.

The singing grounds will offer more nesting areas for female woodcock. The females and young will stay and feed in the new cover. The newly cut areas will provide staging areas for the male woodcock's spring "sky dance". This will encourage a healthy increase in the woodcock population. The rich moist soils present in healthy alder cover will encourage other songbirds to use this habitat.

As well, snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse and white tailed deer benefit from rejuvenated alder growth.

The WCS will return to the Project sites in November 2011 and November 2016 to clear cut another series of alder strips. This future work will provide new feeding habitat and also provide new temporary singing grounds. The singing survey will continue each Spring on the Project Site.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

The WCS has purchased two *four feet by eight feet* signs for the project sites. The signs will be installed as soon as weather permits in Spring 2007 near the public highways that provides access to the project. In the meantime, they are being displayed at any activities or public functions in which the WCS is involved (see Appendix 7.2). The signs will remain on display for the duration of the project. They will provide information about the nature of the project and the partners in the project.

The signs to be erected at the project sites will show Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Woodcock Conservation Society as partners in the project. The signs will acknowledge the contribution of the landowners and the major capital funding provided by Wildlife Habitat Canada.

The WCS will provide the WHC with photographs of the project activities (mailed separately). The WCS is in the process of constructing a web site to further distribute information about their project, both past and proposed. A host site has been reserved and construction is underway.

6.0 FINANCIAL SUMMARY (2006/07)

Revenue	Cash- WHC	In-Kind - WCS	Total
Chaswood Site	\$2581.53	\$193.36	\$2774.89
Lake Egmont Site	\$2667.03	\$189.79	\$2856.82
Total Revenue	\$5,248.56	\$383.15	\$5631.71

Expense	Cash	In-Kind	Total
Chaswood Site	\$2581.53	\$193.36	\$2774.89
Lake Egmont Site	\$2667.03	\$189.79	\$2856.82
Total Expenses	\$5248.56	\$383.15	\$5631.71

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 – Maps of the Project Sites

7.2 – Image(s) of the Project Sign