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LANDOWNER  
GUIDES  
*to a*  
**Successful  
Timber Harvest**

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A black bear is climbing a tree trunk in a forest. The bear is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its head and front paws visible. The tree trunk is light-colored with some orange-brown lichen or bark damage. The background is a blurred forest scene with green foliage.

## Wildlife

### *and your woods*

Your woods are home for wildlife, providing food, water, cover and space.

**There are several characteristics of your woods to consider to make that home as hospitable as possible.** A thoughtfully planned and well-managed harvest is not only economically beneficial, but can also provide important benefits for wildlife by creating food, cover, and diverse habitats.

# Habitat *plans*

**WHETHER YOUR GOAL IS TO ATTRACT SONGBIRDS OR GAME ANIMALS, TIMBER HARVESTS CAN BE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT HABITAT FOR ANIMALS THAT YOU WANT TO THRIVE IN YOUR WOODS.**

With the help of a [county](#) or consulting forester or a wildlife biologist, you can develop a management plan that provides the food, water and shelter needs for the wildlife you want to share your woods with.



## **A few examples:**

- ✓ **Forest songbirds** need a mixture of young trees, old trees, standing wood, and down wood.
- ✓ **White-tailed deer** seek hemlock groves for winter cover and low woody browse for winter feeding.
- ✓ **Spotted salamanders and wood frogs** rely on vernal pools as breeding grounds.
- ✓ **Barred owls** use tall trees with natural cavities to nest and lay eggs.

## **Natural communities**

**A group of plants and animals that recur naturally in similar physical environments (soil, water, nutrients and climate).**

These communities are classified based on the native vegetation that grows in them naturally. Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department recognizes over 90 natural community types. Some natural community types are common, like Northern Hardwood Forest. Others, like the Dry Oak Woodland, are rare.

**Most rare communities produce little valuable wood and are particularly sensitive to disturbance.** Harvests should be designed to protect these areas.

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For more on habitat planning see the [Vermont Voluntary Harvesting Guidelines VHG](#) (pp46-50), or speak to organizations such as the [Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife](#), [Audubon Vermont](#), or [Vermont Coverts](#). Vermont Fish & Wildlife also created an excellent guidebook available at [at their store](#).

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For more on natural communities, see the [VHG](#) (pp 40-41).

# Forest stand & complexity

A variety of trees—in terms of species, density, diameters, and heights—supports healthy forested habitats. Carefully planned harvests can help develop and maintain in your woods the complexity that wildlife needs. Some steps you can take during your harvest to improve the structure and complexity in your woods include:



## CREATE BRUSH PILES

Tree tops left after harvest and brush piles provide cover for animals like ermine, fisher and rabbits.



## KEEP STANDING DEAD TREES

Standing dead trees, particularly those with sloughing bark, are important for bats, and trees with cavities are important for woodpeckers, owls and mammals like squirrels or fisher.



## RETAIN INCLUSIONS

A group of trees that is dissimilar from the surrounding forest can provide important food or cover.



## CONTROL INVASIVE PLANTS

Invasives disrupt natural communities by crowding out native plants and preventing the establishment of young trees. Learn how to protect your woods from [invasives](#).



## USE BUFFERS FOR STREAMS & WETLANDS

Habitat along water is critical for wildlife, but these areas are particularly sensitive to disturbances. For more on safeguarding them, see the [Landowner Guides to a Successful Timber Harvest-Water](#).



## KEEP OLD TREES

Retaining some old trees during a harvest maintains important food sources for wildlife and seed sources for forest regeneration.



## CREATE YOUNG FOREST

When located appropriately, small openings (1-5 acres) that will be allowed to return to forest provide valuable habitat.



## RETAIN FRUIT/NUT PRODUCING TREES

Beech, cherry and apple trees, as well as shrubs like hobble bush or hazelnut, are excellent sources of food for wildlife.

Conducting a harvest while still providing habitat for wildlife is easier than most people would imagine. When preparing your [forest management plan](#) or marking trees to be cut, discuss your wildlife goals with your forester. Through thoughtful planning and follow through, you'll ensure that wildlife always has a place to call home.



For more about wildlife and your woods visit  
[VTCutWithConfidence.com](http://VTCutWithConfidence.com)