

WILDLIFE IN YOUR Young Forest



More Wildlife in Your Woods

CREATE YOUNG
FOREST AND
ENJOY THE
WILDLIFE IT
ATTRACTS

WHEN TO
EXPECT
DIFFERENT
ANIMALS



This guide presents some of the wildlife you may see using your young forest as it grows following a timber harvest or other management practice.

The following lists focus on areas inhabited by the New England cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*), a rare native rabbit that lives in parts of New York east of the Hudson River, and in parts of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, southern New Hampshire, and southern Maine. In this region, conservationists and landowners are carrying out projects to create the young forest and shrubland that New England cottontails need to survive. Such projects also help many other kinds of wildlife that use the same habitat.

Young forest provides abundant food and cover for insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Both rare and common wildlife use young forest, and more than 60 species in the Northeast need it to survive. Other terms sometimes

used to describe this dense, food-rich habitat are **thickets, shrublands, and early successional habitat**.

As development has covered many acres, and as young woodlands have matured to become older forest, the amount of young forest available to wildlife has dwindled. Having diverse wildlife requires having diverse habitats on the land, including some young forest.

In nature, young forest is created by floods, wildfires, storms, and beavers' dam-building and feeding. To protect lives and property, we suppress floods, fires, and beaver activities. Fortunately, we can use **habitat management practices**, such as timber harvests, to mimic natural disturbance events and grow young forest in places where it will do the most good. These habitat projects boost the amount of food available to local wildlife. They also provide dense cover where animals can rest, evade predators, and take shelter during inclement weather.

Will I See a New England Cottontail?

In young forest created by either a natural disturbance or through habitat management, New England cottontails may show up after three or more years of tree and shrub growth. They'll be more likely to occupy a new habitat if it's within a mile or so of an existing New England cottontail population. New England cottontails generally remain in the habitat until the forest is 15 to 20 or more years old, at which point trees shade out shrubs and other low plants that the rabbits need for feeding and hiding.

Your Forest is Unique . . . and Important

Remember, each habitat project will look a bit different because of soil characteristics, the amount of sunlight a site receives, or the types of plants and seed sources present. Also, the years when various animals appear may differ from site to site. Different animals may use the habitat at different times of the day, including at night. Some will breed and feed there in spring and summer, while others will rely on food and cover resources during spring and fall migrations or in winter.



New England cottontail



Native goldenrod, aster, and Virginia rose

How to Use This Guide

Animals that require young forest at some time during their lives are listed in **boldface**; many are rare, and their populations are declining. Notes in parentheses following a species' name indicate a certain season in which an animal is likely to use young forest, or a different name by which the animal is known.

The following lists are only partial; you will likely see other kinds of wildlife as well, or discover signs of their presence, such as tracks and scats (droppings). Not all of the species listed are found throughout the geographic area covered by this publication; consult a reference book to be sure of a correct identification.

Throughout the New England cottontail's range, many young forest habitats are quickly occupied by the eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), a non-native rabbit introduced to the region many years ago. The eastern cottontail is now more abundant than the New England cottontail. It is not included in the following species lists, although it can be found in all of the forest ages described.

Forests are important habitats. Creating enough young forest will let us help the New England cottontail and other wildlife now and in years to come.



American woodcock use newly cleared areas as singing grounds in spring. Mourning doves, dark-eyed juncos, white-throated sparrows, and other birds find food on the exposed ground. Bees emerge from winter nests in soil, plant stems, and cavities in wood. Turtles and snakes bask in the sunlight and lay eggs in sun-warmed soil. As the growing season progresses, caterpillars feed on leaves, and wildflowers provide nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and



American woodcock



Spot-winged glider dragonfly



Red-spotted purple butterfly



Box turtle



American toad

moths. Dragonflies, birds, and bats hunt for flying insects above fresh clearings, and hawks perch nearby to watch for prey. Foxes and other predators may find the patch and add it to their hunting circuits.

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN A FOREST'S FIRST YEAR

Insects

- Ants
- Bumble bees
- Honey bee
- Solitary bees
- Crickets
- Grasshoppers
- Fireflies
- Hoverflies
- Tiger beetles
- American lady butterfly
- Red-spotted purple butterfly
- Spring azure butterfly
- Blue dasher dragonfly
- Green darner dragonfly
- Skimmer dragonflies

Reptiles and Amphibians

- American toad
- Spadefoot toad
- Box turtle**
- Wood turtle**
- Black racer**
- Black rat snake**
- Brown snake
- Garter snake
- Hog-nosed snake
- Milk snake
- Ring-necked snake
- Smooth green snake**
- Worm snake



Black racer

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN A FOREST'S FIRST YEAR

(CONTINUED)

Birds

- Broad-winged hawk
- Cooper's hawk
- Red-tailed hawk
- Wild turkey**
- Bobwhite quail**
- American woodcock**
- Mourning dove
- Common nighthawk
- Whip-poor-will**
- Chimney swift
- Ruby-throated hummingbird
- Northern flicker
- Eastern phoebe
- Barn swallow
- Tree swallow
- Eastern bluebird
- Baltimore oriole
- Dark-eyed junco**

Whip-poor-will

- Fox sparrow (winter)
- Song sparrow
- White-throated sparrow**

Mammals

- Opossum
- Big brown bat
- Little brown bat
- Bobcat**
- Coyote
- Mink
- Short-tailed weasel** (ermine)
- Raccoon
- Red fox
- White-tailed deer



Northern flicker



Cooper's hawk



Ruby-throated hummingbird



Mourning dove



Tree swallow



Bobcat



Bobwhite quail



White-throated sparrow



Red fox



A single summer can yield a lush growth of grasses and wildflowers. In succeeding years, vines and shrubs spread, and saplings spring up. A wide range of birds feed themselves and their young on increasing numbers of insects, especially butterflies and moths and their caterpillars. Wild turkeys, field sparrows, and blue-winged warblers nest



Monarch butterfly



Bumble bee



Smooth green snake



Yellow-breasted chat

on the ground or in low shrubs. Turtles, snakes, and toads use the site for basking, feeding, and breeding. The expanding food and cover resources attract mammals, including small rodents, such as mice and voles, and the weasels, foxes, and bobcats that hunt them. In areas of new habitat near existing New England cottontail populations, these native rabbits may show up after around three years.

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN 1-5 YEARS

Insects

- Ants
- Bumble bees
- Honey bee
- Solitary bees
- Hoverflies
- Flower beetles
- Crickets
- Grasshoppers
- Fireflies
- Leafhoppers
- Great-spangled fritillary
- Monarch butterfly
- Silver-spotted skipper
- Spicebush swallowtail
- Tiger swallowtail

Reptiles and Amphibians

- American toad
- Spadefoot toad
- Box turtle**
- Spotted turtle** (near wetlands)
- Wood turtle**
- Black racer**
- Black rat snake**
- Brown snake
- Garter snake
- Milk snake
- Ring-necked snake
- Smooth green snake**
- Worm snake



Wood turtle

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN 1-5 YEARS

(CONTINUED)

Birds

- Broad-winged hawk
- Cooper's hawk
- Red-tailed hawk
- Sharp-shinned hawk
- Wild turkey**
- Ruffed grouse**
- Bobwhite quail**
- American woodcock**
- Mourning dove
- Yellow-billed cuckoo**
- Great horned owl
- Screech owl
- Whip-poor-will**
- Ruby-throated hummingbird
- Eastern kingbird**
- Eastern phoebe
- Willow flycatcher**
- Yellow-bellied flycatcher (spring, fall)
- Barn swallow
- Tree swallow
- Brown thrasher**
- Gray catbird**
- Northern mockingbird
- Hermit thrush**
- Cedar waxwing
- Northern shrike** (winter)
- White-eyed vireo
- Blue-winged warbler**
- Common yellowthroat
- Golden-winged warbler**
- Mourning warbler**
- Nashville warbler**
- Prairie warbler**
- Yellow warbler**

- Yellow-breasted chat**
- Baltimore oriole
- Northern cardinal
- Indigo bunting**
- Purple finch
- Pine grosbeak (winter)
- Common redpoll (winter)
- American goldfinch
- Eastern towhee**
- Chipping sparrow
- Field sparrow
- Fox sparrow (winter)
- Song sparrow
- Dark-eyed junco**

Mammals

- Opossum
- Big brown bat
- Little brown bat
- New England cottontail**
- Snowshoe hare**
- Deer mouse
- Meadow jumping mouse
- Meadow vole
- White-footed mouse
- Southern red-backed vole**
- Coyote
- Gray fox
- Red fox
- Raccoon
- Long-tailed weasel
- Mink
- Short-tailed weasel** (ermine)
- Striped skunk
- Bobcat**
- Black bear
- White-tailed deer
- Moose**



Coyote



Snowshoe hare



Blue-winged warbler



Yellow-billed cuckoo



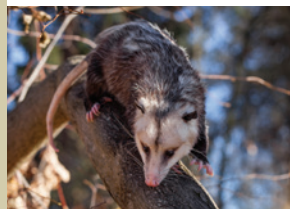
Wild turkey



Black bear



Brown thrasher



Opossum



Ruffed grouse

IN 5 to 10 YEARS...



Insects abound, including flies, bees, wasps, and caterpillars and their adult-stage butterflies and moths. Reptiles and amphibians feed on insects, vegetation, and fruits, and find shade during summer's heat. Wild turkeys, woodcock, and ruffed grouse nest on the ground, and many other birds nest in shrubs and small trees. Birds that breed



Song sparrow



Monarch caterpillar



Sphinx moth



Common yellowthroat

in older forest – such as scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks – visit the site and catch insects to take back to their nestlings; when the young birds leave the nest, their parents bring them to the dense habitat, where they learn to feed themselves. Mammals from mice to black bears take advantage of the plentiful food and thick hiding cover. New England cottontails become more abundant.

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN 5-10 YEARS

Insects

- Ants
- Bumble bees
- Honey bee
- Solitary bees
- Hoverflies
- Bush crickets
- Grasshoppers
- Fireflies
- Buck moth
- Showy emerald moth
- Sphinx moths
- Prometheus moth
- Mourning cloak butterfly
- Monarch butterfly
- Viceroy butterfly
- Spicebush swallowtail
- Tiger swallowtail

Reptiles and Amphibians

- American toad
- Fowler's toad
- Box turtle**
- Black racer**
- Black rat snake**
- Brown snake
- Garter snake
- Hog-nosed snake
- Milk snake
- Ring-necked snake
- Worm snake



New England cottontail

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN 5-10 YEARS

(CONTINUED)

Birds

- Cooper's hawk
- Sharp-shinned hawk
- American woodcock**
- Bobwhite quail**
- Ruffed grouse**
- Wild turkey**
- Black-billed cuckoo**
- Yellow-billed cuckoo**
- Great horned owl
- Saw-whet owl
- Screech owl
- Whip-poor-will**
- Ruby-throated hummingbird
- Eastern kingbird**
- Willow flycatcher**
- Yellow-bellied flycatcher (spring, fall)
- Barn swallow
- Tree swallow
- Brown thrasher**
- Gray catbird**
- Northern mockingbird
- Hermit thrush**
- Swainson's thrush (spring, fall)
- Cedar waxwing
- Northern shrike** (winter)
- White-eyed vireo
- Blue-winged warbler**
- Canada warbler**
- Chestnut-sided warbler**
- Common Yellowthroat
- Golden-winged warbler**
- Ovenbird
- Mourning warbler**

- Nashville warbler**
- Prairie warbler**
- Yellow warbler**
- Yellow-breasted chat**
- Scarlet tanager
- Northern cardinal
- Indigo bunting**
- Purple finch
- Pine grosbeak (winter)
- Rose-breasted grosbeak
- Common redpoll (winter)
- American goldfinch
- Eastern towhee**
- Chipping sparrow
- Song sparrow
- Dark-eyed junco**

Mammals

- Opossum
- Big brown bat
- Little brown bat
- New England cottontail**
- Snowshoe hare**
- Beaver (near water)
- Chipmunk
- Deer mouse
- Porcupine
- Southern red-backed vole**
- White-footed mouse
- Coyote
- Gray fox
- Red fox
- Raccoon
- Fisher
- Long-tailed weasel
- Mink
- Short-tailed weasel** (ermine)
- Striped skunk
- Bobcat**
- Black bear
- Moose**
- White-tailed deer



Eastern towhee



White-tailed deer



Prairie warbler



Eastern kingbird



Indigo bunting



Wild turkey nest

IN 10 to 15 YEARS...



Trees have grown taller and begun shading out some lower plants, but the habitat remains thick, providing ample food and cover. Populations of tree-feeding caterpillars increase. Birds peak in abundance and diversity: ruby-throated hummingbirds, black-and-white warblers, veeries, and eastern towhees are a few of the many birds you may see during the breeding season, while others show up during spring and



Southern red-backed vole



Tiger swallowtail



Garter snake



Chestnut-sided warbler

fall migrations or find important food in winter. In areas near water, beavers may cut regrowing trees for food and dam-building material. New England cottontails continue to use the habitat, with populations peaking toward the end of this forest stage. Landowners may start planning future young forest projects to renew habitat and provide a home for this rare rabbit and other wildlife.

Checklist OF WILDLIFE IN 10-15 YEARS

Insects

- Ants
- Bumble bees
- Honey bee
- Solitary bees
- Hoverflies
- Crickets
- Tree crickets
- Grasshoppers
- Buck moth
- Imperial moth
- Polyphemus moth
- Luna moth
- Sphinx moth
- Banded hairstreak butterfly
- Monarch butterfly
- Spicebush swallowtail
- Tiger swallowtail
- Weevils

Reptiles and Amphibians

- American toad
- Black rat snake**
- Garter snake
- Milk snake
- Ring-necked snake



Cedar waxwing

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE IN 10-15 YEARS

(CONTINUED)

Birds

- Broad-winged hawk
- Cooper's hawk
- Sharp-shinned hawk
- American woodcock**
- Ruffed grouse**
- Wild turkey**
- Black-billed cuckoo**
- Yellow-billed cuckoo**
- Barred owl
- Great horned owl
- Saw-whet owl
- Screech owl
- Ruby-throated hummingbird
- Northern flicker
- Yellow-bellied sapsucker
- Great crested flycatcher
- Willow flycatcher**
- Yellow-bellied flycatcher (spring, fall)
- Brown thrasher**
- Gray catbird**
- Northern mockingbird
- Hermit thrush**
- Swainson's thrush (spring, fall)
- Veery
- Wood thrush
- Cedar waxwing
- American redstart**
- Black-and-white warbler**
- Blue-winged warbler**
- Canada warbler**
- Chestnut-sided warbler**
- Golden-winged warbler**
- Mourning warbler**
- Nashville warbler**

- Prairie warbler**
- Yellow warbler**
- Common grackle
- Scarlet tanager
- Northern cardinal
- Pine grosbeak (winter)
- Purple finch
- Rose-breasted grosbeak
- Common redpoll (winter)
- Chipping sparrow
- Eastern towhee**
- Song sparrow
- White-throated sparrow**

Mammals

- Opossum
- Short-tailed shrew
- New England cottontail**
- Snowshoe hare**
- Beaver (near water)
- Chipmunk
- Deer mouse
- Porcupine
- Southern red-backed vole**
- White-footed mouse
- Woodchuck
- Woodland jumping mouse
- Coyote
- Gray fox
- Red fox
- Raccoon
- Fisher
- Long-tailed weasel
- Mink
- Short-tailed weasel** (ermine)
- Striped skunk
- Bobcat**
- Black bear
- Moose**
- White-tailed deer



Yellow warblers



American woodcock



Mink



Gray catbird



Scarlet tanager



Hermit thrush



Raccoon

IN 15 to 20+ YEARS...



This age of woodland generally offers less food and cover than younger or older growth. Most trees aren't mature enough to produce abundant nuts, and understory plants, including fruit-bearing shrubs, thin out in the trees' shade. Abundant forest insects, including butterfly and moth caterpillars, provide food for birds and other animals. Several kinds of woodland salamanders return as the increased shade



Luna moth



Red eft



Wood frog

supports the moist conditions they need. New England cottontail numbers drop off until the rabbits no longer live in the forest patch. Landowners can "refresh" the habitat through another management action, such as a noncommercial timber cut, or, to meet the goals they set for their woodland, create a new patch of thick young forest elsewhere on their property.

Checklist OF WILDLIFE IN 15-20+ YEARS

Insects

- Ants
- Bumble bees
- Banded hairstreak butterfly
- Oak beauty moth
- Imperial moth
- Polyphemus moth
- Sphinx moths
- Luna moth
- Beetles
- Crickets
- Grasshoppers
- Weevils

Reptiles and Amphibians

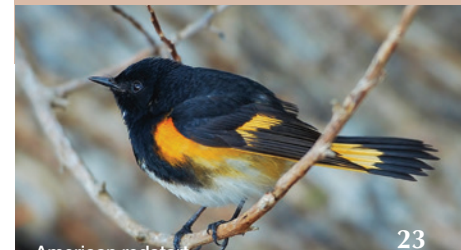
- Red-spotted newt (red eft)
- Redback salamander
- American toad
- Spring peeper
- Gray tree frog
- Wood frog
- Black rat snake**
- Ring-necked snake



Moose



Beaver



American redstart

Checklist

OF WILDLIFE
IN 15-20+
YEARS

(CONTINUED)

Birds

- Broad-winged hawk
- Cooper's hawk
- Sharp-shinned hawk
- American woodcock**
- Ruffed grouse**
- Wild turkey**
- Barred owl
- Great horned owl
- Saw-whet owl
- Screech owl
- Ruby-throated hummingbird
- Downy woodpecker
- Hairy woodpecker
- Northern flicker
- Pileated woodpecker
- Yellow-bellied sapsucker
- Eastern phoebe
- Eastern wood pewee
- Great crested flycatcher
- Least flycatcher
- Blue jay
- Black-capped chickadee
- Red-breasted nuthatch
- White-breasted nuthatch
- Brown creeper
- Hermit thrush**
- Veery
- Wood thrush
- Blue-gray gnatcatcher
- Ruby-crowned kinglet
- Cedar waxwing
- Red-eyed vireo
- American redstart**
- Black-and-white warbler**

- Canada warbler**
- Chestnut-sided warbler**
- Hooded warbler
- Yellow-rumped warbler
- Scarlet tanager
- Northern cardinal
- Rose-breasted grosbeak**
- Eastern towhee**

Mammals

- Opossum
- Short-tailed shrew
- New England cottontail**
- Snowshoe hare**
- Beaver (near water)
- Chipmunk
- Deer mouse
- White-footed mouse
- Woodland jumping mouse
- Gray squirrel
- Red squirrel
- Porcupine
- Coyote
- Gray fox
- Red fox
- Fisher
- Long-tailed weasel
- Short-tailed weasel** (ermine)
- Striped skunk
- Bobcat**
- Black bear
- Moose**
- White-tailed deer



Chipmunk



Downy woodpecker



White-breasted nuthatch



White-footed mouse



Red-eyed vireo



Eastern phoebe



Black-capped chickadee



Barred owl

Young Forest

WILDLIFE
NEEDS IT

PEOPLE
VALUE IT



Many kinds of wildlife need the dense, highly productive habitat known as young forest. The New England cottontail is considered an “umbrella species.” This means that when people create young forest for this rare regional rabbit, they’re also making food and cover for a host of other wildlife. The preceding pages list a selection of those animals.

People own land for many different reasons. Some cut timber to provide a financial return or to heat their homes. Others view their properties as natural retreats where they can enjoy peace and quiet. Many landowners have a strong desire to provide a living place for wildlife – and seeing animals, or finding evidence of their presence, brings a thrill to the hiker, hunter, birder, or snowshoeing enthusiast.

The young forest needed by New England cottontails and many other animals doesn’t last forever – generally around 10 to 20 years, after which it returns to being older forest. For that reason, management activities must be fairly frequent and ongoing to keep a healthy amount of young forest available to wildlife both locally and regionwide.

Want to make some young forest? Contact your state’s wildlife agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, or a certified forester for details. For some projects, full or partial funding may be available. Find contacts at www.newenglandcottontail.org, www.youngforest.org, and www.timberdoodle.org.

Enjoy being a steward of your land and wildlife!

- ➔ **Make a trail so you can walk past a habitat area quietly, upping your chances of seeing wildlife.**
- ➔ **Set up trail cameras to take photos of animals using your young forest.**
- ➔ **Make jams and jellies from grapes, blueberries, blackberries, and other wild fruits.**
- ➔ **Build brush piles where wildlife can shelter from the elements and escape predators.**
- ➔ **Keep a journal recording animals you meet and where and when you see them.**
- ➔ **Sign up for eBird or iNaturalist and record sightings and photos of wildlife.**
- ➔ **Host a seminar where natural resources professionals can explain how young forest is important to overall forest health and to a wide range of wildlife.**

Photographers: Tom Berriman, Kelly Boland, Chris Buelow, Bill Byrne, Charles Fergus, Tim Flanigan, Paul Fusco, Dave Govatski, Ed Guthro, Richard Martin, Jonathan Mays, Art McKenzie, Phil Myers, Kate O'Brien, Jim Oehler, Marianne Piche, Robert Royse, Ray Thiel, Victor Young, USDA, USFWS



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