

News From The

White Mountain

National Forest

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**White Mountain National Forest and Partners Honored for Protection of Bicknell Thrush
Habitat in Mittersill Land Exchange**

On March 25, 2010 the White Mountain National Forest along with State partners and scientists from the New Hampshire Audubon were honored during the 2010 Wings Across the Americas Conservation Awards ceremony. Forest Service Chief Tidwell presented the Habitat Management and Partnership award to Forest Service employees on behalf of their partners for the Mittersill Land Exchange, a project that secured conservation of Bicknell thrush habitat.

In May 2007, the State of New Hampshire proposed an exchange of the Sentinel Mountain State Forest for 100 acres of National Forest System lands adjacent to the Cannon Mountain Ski Area. The high elevation lands at Mittersill contained long-abandoned ski trails as well as important habitat for Bicknell's thrush, a species of concern to State and Forest biologists.

In exchange, the State offered the Sentinel Mountain State Forest – a working forest that included one of New Hampshire's few sections of non-Forest Service administered sections of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

The exchange held promise, but both federal and state biologists were committed to formalizing the future protection of the Bicknell's thrush habitat before any exchange. The State, Audubon Society of New Hampshire, and the White Mountain National Forest developed a Memorandum of Understanding that provides winter recreation opportunities on the network of abandoned ski trails and prevents expansion of any new trails into the surrounding habitat. Summer operations, monitoring protocols, continuing cooperation, and funding are also addressed.

The Mittersill Land Exchange represents an integrated and collaborative approach to bird conservation across agency program areas. This winter, skiers have enjoyed the re-opened trails at Mittersill. The Appalachian Trail reflects a more consistent ownership and administration. And the Bicknell's thrush at Mittersill can be secure in the planned habitat protection long into the future.

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