

# FOCUS SPECIES FORESTRY: AN APPLIED APPROACH TO INTEGRATING TIMBER AND BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTHEAST

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Forest certification and other forest management programs have required foresters to place greater emphasis on biodiversity in their management plans. Many traditional wildlife management guides have featured management for a limited number of species on the a-la-carte menu format, i.e., the landowner or manager identifies species of interest and follows those recommendations. There are also some extremely comprehensive wildlife guides that are excellent background references, but due to their breadth and depth they do not readily lend themselves to field use or ready integration into forest management plans. Newer guides to biodiversity management typically emphasize general principles but do not have recommendations specific to species or forest types. Focus Species Forestry addresses these gaps by providing forest managers with a tool to readily integrate biodiversity considerations into more traditional approaches to forest management.

Focus Species Forestry has a goal of comprehensive biodiversity management, either as a stand-alone system or within the context of management for other values such as timber. It is based on 25 focus species that represent the breadth of forest types, development stages, and sensitive habitats found in the region's forests. In sum, these species serve as a coarse-filter "umbrella" whose habitat covers those of all other forest vertebrate wildlife species and most elements of forest biodiversity. A suite of 12 "primary" focus species has been identified to further streamline forest management considerations. These species cover early-successional forest, extensive intermediate to mature forest, late-successional forest, dead and decaying wood, vernal pools, and streams. Management plans for these habitat types are developed in conjunction with management for other values. Options for management at different scales (small woodlands and larger, landscape-scale forests) are also discussed. Sources of information for rare, threatened, or endangered species are also included.

The Maine guide is organized under six broad forest ecosystem types, and includes forest type and wildlife species management recommendations that can be integrated into typical forest management plans. By linking management to a relatively short list of easy-to-identify species and forest types, the goal is to make biodiversity management more understandable and attainable within a traditional forest management context.

Forest management plans based on Focus Species Forestry should meet the biodiversity requirements for FSC, SFI, and Tree Farm certification. The species, forest types, and management recommendations featured in the original Maine guide have broad applicability to the remainder of New England, New York, the Maritime provinces, southern Quebec and southern Ontario. A supplement is included with the Maine guide for application in other northeastern states and provinces. Plans are under way to develop a regional version of the guide.