



USDA Forest Service

URBANFOREST CONNECTIONS

webinar series

Wildlife Conservation in Cities and Suburbs: Research, programs, and tools

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 | 1:00 – 2:00pm ET

PRESENTER ABSTRACT

Beyond Benefits for Humans: How cities can support ecosystem services for wildlife

Susannah Lerman

Research Ecologist

Northern Research Station, USDA Forest Service & University of Massachusetts

Amherst, MA

Urbanization profoundly transforms landscapes. A major consequence of increasing urbanization is the loss of essential wildlife habitat, which has led to a steep decline in urban wildlife diversity and subsequent loss of critical ecosystem services, such as pollination. Healthy urban forests (including parks, yards, street trees, remnant forests, and vacant lots) have the potential to alleviate some of the detrimental impacts of urban and suburban development for wildlife by providing critical habitat. This presentation identifies strategies for quantifying habitat quality and habitat requirements necessary for vibrant urban wildlife populations – both of paramount importance for conservation initiatives and policy. Three distinct lines of inquiry will be described: First, by developing habitat assessment tools to integrate into *i-Tree*, an urban forest assessment tool, we increase the capacity to quantify available habitat and make detailed recommendations for habitat improvement projects. Second, by engaging with citizen scientists through *Neighborhood Nestwatch*, a project that assesses the health and vitality of backyard bird populations, we expand our conservation partners while strengthening scientific literacy. Third, by testing how different yard management behaviors, such as lawn mowing frequency, influences bee diversity, we identify immediate and short-term solutions for providing wildlife habitat and improving biodiversity in private yards. Involving the public in scientific research can generate additional conservation interest within communities, and help build a stronger base of support and action for local sustainability efforts.

This presentation highlights urban wildlife research at the USDA Forest Service and current efforts to develop decision support tools, identify new conservation partners, and provide habitat recommendations for enhancing the urban forest and the many benefits it provides for both people and wildlife. Key research gaps in urban wildlife research will be addressed.

Presented at the *ACES: A Community on Ecosystem Services* conference, December 2014.