

**NEW HAMPSHIRE
AUDUBON**

Afield



Featuring
**SANCTUARIES
& EDUCATION**

Summer 2022

Sanctuary Notes

Forest Management for the Birds, Part III

Photos and story by Marc Nutter



Walking through the seed cut, Phil Brown and Jeremy Turner appreciate the early successional habitat that was created in this patch cut. Wildlife snags were also left to encourage insects and cavity nesters.

New Hampshire Audubon Wildlife Sanctuaries provide many options for how to manage lands for diverse benefits. One of our most important strategic priorities is to demonstrate exemplary management on our lands. In some cases, this means letting natural processes shape the future of the landscape. Ice storms, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disturbances can re-set the age of a forest and create conditions for wildlife that weren't present before. In other cases, wildlife and habitat benefit from active management, including timber harvesting. There are many considerations we take into account when making decisions about how and if to manage our lands. Our long-term treatment of the Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary offers a great example of how we approach management for specific bird species.

Research in New England by universities and forest agencies, such as the US Forest Service, prioritize maintaining current forests into the future to help store carbon and increase ecological resilience from the impacts of climate change. As we know, forests provide clean air and water and essential features for all our wildlife. Our forests are resilient. The critical point here is that the forests NH Audubon protects will always be forests. Habitats we conserve will never be developed or converted.

The management of our lands begins with this grounding principle: we must look at the entire ecology of a wildlife sanctuary, see what is doing well and which elements need

adjustment. We keep a tally of species seen and heard, and consult with our science team and other professional partners to see where we can make improvements. The forestry work done at Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary over the past six years is a direct result of our careful planning and serves as a model for NH Audubon's land management vision.

This "part three" documentation continues our reporting on management activities for the 590 acre wildlife sanctuary. We are working from a 2015 forest management plan created in consultation with The Ecosystem Management Company, a subsidiary of Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd. In general, habitat goals for Kensan-Devan were and still are, "to protect and maintain interior forest habitat, protect interior wetlands, create early successional habitat, and increase forest structure and vertical diversity" (Forest Management Plan, pg 29).

Specifically, we are creating habitat and increasing the presence of these key breeding birds: Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Blue-headed Vireo, Eastern Wood Pewee, and Wood Thrush.

To make sure we knew how our actions on the landscape affected this list of focal species, we conducted breeding bird surveys in 2016 (before the timber harvest), 2017 (after harvest), and again last summer (2021). The results are in, and they indeed look promising.

SUMMARY OF 2021 RESULTS

The timber harvest of 2016-2017 created early-successional forest habitat within Kensan-Devan’s Meetinghouse Pond section with broad success:

- ◇ Newly-present and abundant counts of Prairie Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and Eastern Towhees.
- ◇ Some mature-forest species including Blue-headed Vireo appeared to decline after the harvest, especially within the reduced canopy areas, which was expected.
- ◇ Several species, including Eastern Wood-Pewee and Black-throated Green Warbler exhibited mixed trends, thereby indicating a potentially stable population. Future data will help paint a clearer picture of populations in this category.
- ◇ Ovenbird and Red-eyed Vireo remained the most abundant birds on the property despite an initial population decline immediately following the harvest, which suggests a satisfactory amount of mature forest exists at Kensan-Devan and within the surrounding landscape.

THE NEXT PHASE

The last phase of the plan was completed this past year under the direction of our consulting forester, Jeremy Turner of Meadowsend. Throughout the project, wildlife habitat improvements were made including leaving existing standing dead trees (snags), creating additional snags by girdling some trees, and being extremely careful around water resources.

We look forward to seeing how this next phase of forest management affects the breeding birds of the Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary in the coming years. Last spring, a trail crew



Loggers left coarse woody debris in strategic locations and even built some rustic structures like this tree leaning on its own trunk to create habitat.

from the Student Conservation Association updated the trails which will host self-guided interpretive signs that showcase some of the sustainable forest management practices in place and the results.

Please do visit the sanctuary to see for yourself the positive impact we’ve had on our forest birds this summer. And, for a guided experience, register for the walk on Sunday June 26 at 8am. We’ll be out with our good friends Phil Brown and Steven Lamonde, talking about the forestry work and its impact on the breeding birds of Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary.

More information about this property and its management can be found at: nhaudubon.org/kensan.

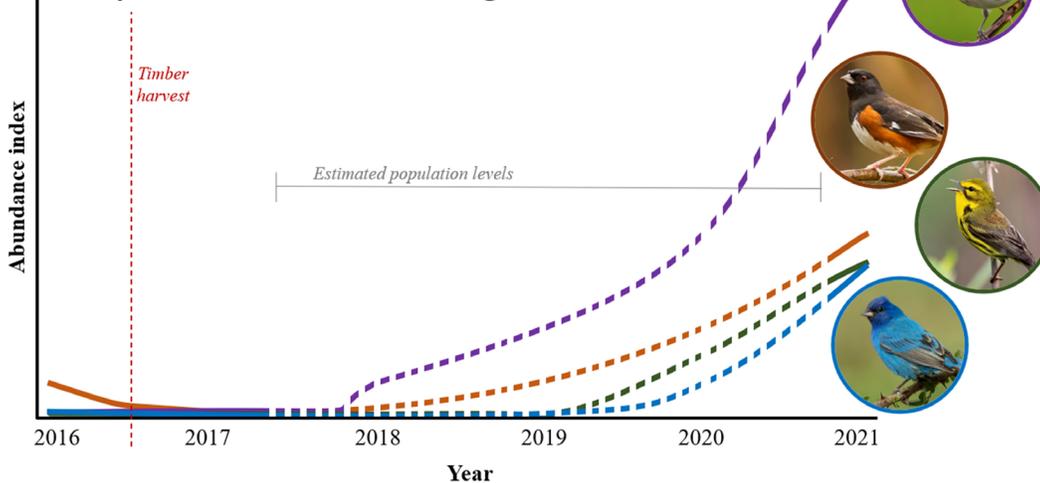
Works Cited:

Lamonde, S, and J. Littleton. (2021). *Five Years Post-Harvest: Breeding Bird Population Survey and Habitat Assessment for the Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary*. Moosewood Ecological LLC, Chesterfield, New Hampshire.

The Ecosystem Management Company (TEMC). (2015). *Forest Management Plan for the New Hampshire Audubon Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary*.

Breeding Bird Surveys conducted on the property: Chad Witco, Antioch New England (2016, 2017); Stephen Lamonde, Moosewood Ecological LLC (2021).

Breeding Bird Population Responses to Early-Successional Forest Management



Graph of species abundance at Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary for New Hampshire Audubon’s four early-successional forest birds: Chestnut-sided warbler (purple), Eastern Towhee (orange), Prairie Warbler (green), and Indigo Bunting (blue). Courtesy of Steven Lamonde.