

# HARTFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) invites you to enjoy a hidden jewel, the Hartford Town Forest. What makes it so special? It is one of the largest parcels of undeveloped land in Hartford and is home to numerous animals from secretive amphibians to large mammals; even wide-ranging bear and moose pass through the forest.

The Hartford Town Forest is a 423-acre parcel that abuts the 142-acre Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge (HFWR). Both parcels are almost entirely forested and collectively contain three old reservoirs, several miles of recreational trails, seasonal and permanent streams, varied topography, and diverse wildlife habitats. The Parks and Recreation Commission oversees the HFWR, with its recreation and wildlife protection focus. The HCC manages the more remote Hartford Town Forest.

*The HCC became custodians of the Hartford Town Forest (HTF) in 1997. We strive to balance three forestry objectives:*

- **FOREST PRODUCTS:** to sustainably grow and harvest trees while respecting the natural communities
- **WILDLIFE:** to provide and enhance diverse habitats for native wildlife
- **RECREATION:** to promote recreation that will a) ensure all users' safety, and b) 'tread lightly' on the forest and its wildlife

*This newsletter focuses on the HTF. We'll review what the HCC is doing to manage the HTF and what we can all do to be good stewards of this special place.*

## 2010 HCC EVENTS CALENDAR

April 17, Saturday	<b>Vernal Pool Walk</b> , 10:00 a.m. — noon, Hartford Town Forest*
April 22, Thursday	<b>Earth Day, Kim Royar (VT Fish and Wildlife) Lecture on Bobcats and the Linking Lands Alliance presents its Wildlife Habitat Map</b> , 7 p.m., Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS), Quechee
April 24–May 1	<b>Green-Up Hartford Days</b> , green-up bags available at Municipal Office*
May 1, Saturday	<b>Green-Up Day/Arbor Day Celebration</b> , 9:00 a.m. — noon, Lyman Point Park* HCC green-up bags available, Tree Board/Trees Matter tree and shrub sale
May, TBA	<b>Riparian Tree Planting with the White River Partnership*</b>
June 5, Saturday	<b>Trails Day</b> , 9:00 a.m. — noon, Hartford Town Forest*
June 5, Saturday	<b>Hartford Hazardous Waste Collection</b> , 9:00 a.m. — noon, Hartford Recycling Center
July 17, Saturday	<b>Tree and Invasive Plant ID Walk</b> , 10:00 a.m.— noon, Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge*
Sept., TBA	<b>Wetland Restoration Planting</b> , Hartford Town Forest*
Sept. 18, Saturday	<b>Invasive Plant Removal</b> , 9:00 a.m. — noon, Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge*
October 2, Saturday	<b>Source to Sea Connecticut River Watershed Clean Up</b> , 10:00 a.m. — noon*
Feb. 2011, TBA	<b>Snowshoe Hike</b> , Hartford Town Forest*

\* Please contact Matt Osborn for more information 295-3075 mosborn@hartford-vt.org

## BOBCATS



The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is an elusive, wary, and primarily nocturnal mammal named for its short "bobbed" tail. However, if one is fortunate enough to see a bobcat, the cat's beautiful coloration and markings are more noteworthy than the length of its tail.

Bobcats are found in all regions of Vermont. Males of the species are larger than females. Bobcats

are about 20 inches tall and measure 30 to 40 inches long. Bobcats, strictly carnivorous and wary of human habitation, rarely prey on poultry or livestock. They consume mostly rodents, small game, and carrion. Male bobcats occasionally bring down deer, especially if he can drop onto its back. Bobcats cache their food by methodically burying it with combinations of snow, leaves, dirt, and some of the prey's sheared off hair. The bobcat can then eat for several days on its stored food.

Bobcats come together only during breeding season, which in Vermont generally occurs in February or March. The male bobcat's territory overlaps that of several females, but female territories are exclusive. Females seek secluded denning sites and after a two-month gestation period give birth to an average of two to three cubs.

Deep snow curtails all bobcats from hunting until the snow develops a crust. For females, difficulty in hunting is especially challenging since they need to maintain their nutritional health to bear healthy cubs. Cubs remain with their mothers from nine to twelve months learning what and how to hunt.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has identified the bobcat as a "species of greatest conservation need." Though it is known that bobcats have special habitat needs, their needs are not fully understood. It appears that steep rocky ledges, wetlands, and large undeveloped tracts of land connected by corridors are important to the future of bobcats in Vermont. UVM and Vermont Fish and Wildlife are conducting collaborative research looking at how ledge habitat, landscape fragmentation, road densities, and increasing human densities affect bobcat habitat use, bobcat birth rates, and bobcat survivability.



Bobcat photo: Deb James

***Learn more about Vermont's bobcats and other large mammals***

***FREE Earth Day presentation by Kim Royar  
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Furbearer Biologist  
Thursday, April 22, 7 p.m. VINS, Quechee***

# FORESTRY IN THE TOWN FOREST

A forest ecosystem is composed of complex relationships among many elements, including species having life cycles extending beyond a human's lifetime. Sustainable forest management requires understanding the big picture and taking a long view. A forest resource management plan is designed to guide the long range care of the entire forest ecosystem. The plan couples landowner objectives with an inventory of existing natural and man-made resources (eg: soils, topography, water features, wildlife populations, stone walls, cellar holes, recreational trails). From these, foresters work with owners to set goals and prescribe specific actions that will help meet the owner's objectives.

The Selectboard assigned management of the Hartford Town Forest (HTF) to the HCC in 1997. Our first task was to update the 1984 Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the property, including the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. The Town hired Harwood Forestry Services Inc. to develop the new management plan.

Adopted in 1999, the revised FMP redirected forest management towards promoting a balance of three goals: timber produced in an environmentally sustainable manner, provisions for enhanced wildlife habitat, and promotion of recreation that will ensure all users' safety and 'tread lightly' on the forest and its resources.

Timber management shifted from a strategy of quickly replacing the aging, defective trees with natural seedlings through a sequence of heavy cuts to a strategy of using periodic lighter cuts to create a more diverse forest with trees of all ages. We gave up some present and future timber value but are developing an accessible public woodlot that serves broader community goals and ecological values. The smaller, less dramatic treatments give human and wildlife users as well as ecological processes time to adjust more gradually.

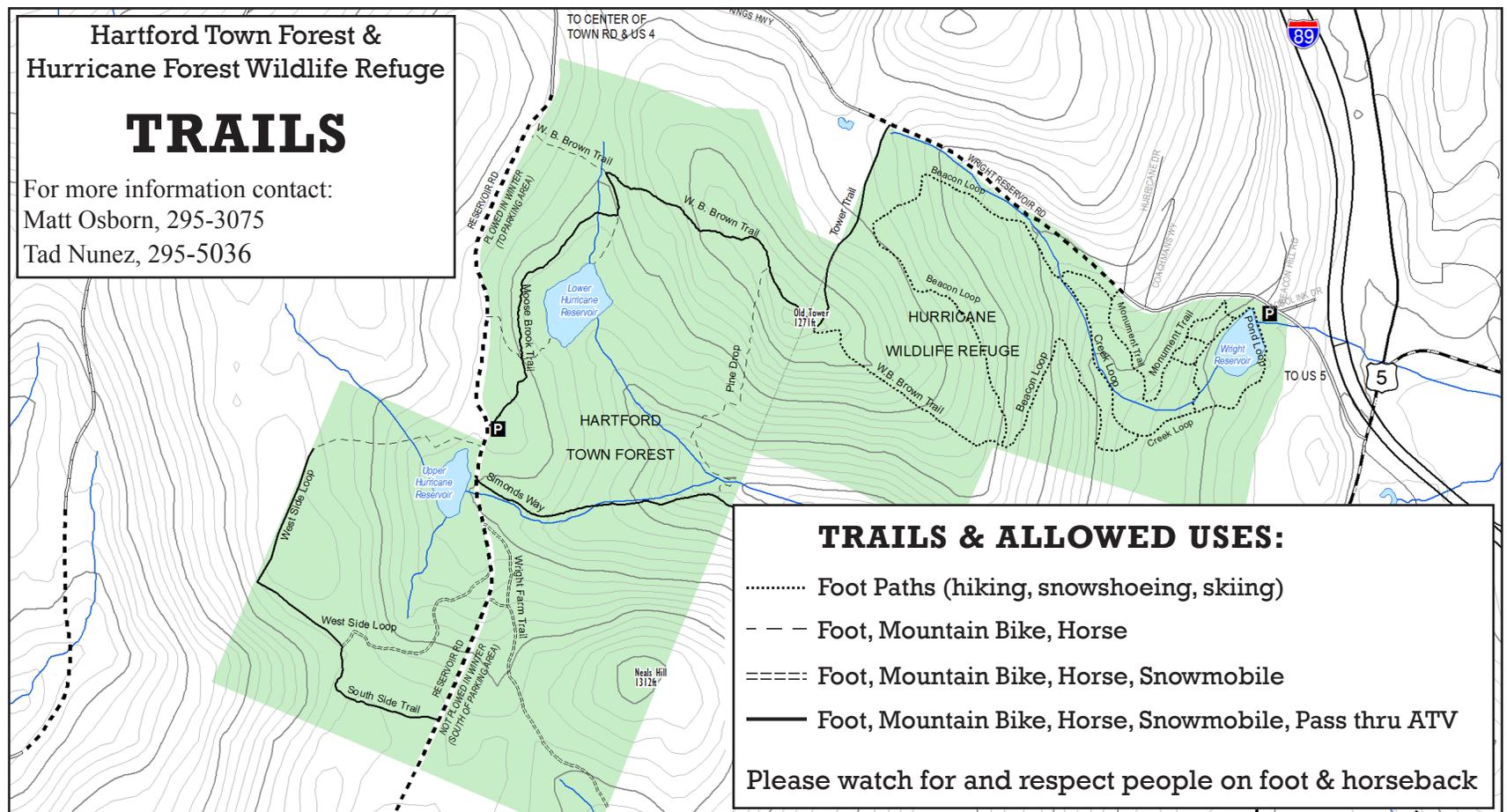
Guided by the FMP, over the last ten years, we've enhanced wildlife habitat. We released old apple trees by removing competing trees that were shading the old apples. Once released from shade, the apple trees produce more flowers and fruit, which benefit birds and mammals. The Hartford Area Career and Technology Center's Natural Resource classes taught by Tom Ostler worked with Harwood Forestry to create small, wildlife habitat clearings that offer useful and varied habitat within the forest.

We've also initiated two commercial timber harvests (the winters of 2005-'06 and 2007-'08). These harvests were designed and orchestrated by our forester based on the objectives and standards set forth in our plan. We organized pre-harvest and post-harvest walks with the forester to inform people about the logging and sustainable forestry. Revenues from the timber harvests were put into the Town Conservation Fund for future HTF management activities.

In 2009, Harwood Forestry Services won the bid and is working with us to update the plan for ten years beginning in 2010. With input from two public meetings the update proposes some minor changes: the combined forest and wildlife reserve are divided into seven management areas. Harvests will rotate to different areas every three to four years so each area will be treated approximately on a 20-year cycle. Treatments will be customized considering the unique characteristics of each area and the long range objectives listed below.

## Forest Management Plan Objectives:

- *Maintain a healthy, viable forest resource using sustainable, socially responsible and environmentally sensitive methods.*
- *Protect all water resources using acceptable management practices for the benefit of both water quality and riparian wildlife habitat protection.*
- *Maintain and enhance wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity.*
- *Develop and maintain a multiple use recreational network that respects the users and the related natural ecosystems. Strive to balance the increasing public use of this resource with the desire to provide suitable habitats for a variety of wildlife populations.*
- *Expand the educational uses of the property for youth and adults through cooperation with schools, outdoor groups, and professional organizations.*
- *Educational and recreational activities should be exemplary and follow 'tread lightly' guidelines (right).*



**PLEASE HELP US PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT**

PLEASE FOLLOW THE RULES SET FORTH IN THE HTF RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

# RECREATION IN THE TOWN FOREST

We invite you to discover and explore the wonders of this special place. Recreational opportunities abound with an established trail network for a wide variety of uses. For your safety and to protect wildlife, please remember that this is a working forest and home to many animals; therefore, it may be necessary from time to time to close certain sections of the forest or to relocate or even close trails as we manage the HTF's timber harvests and protect wildlife habitats.

The HCC relies on assistance from volunteer groups to help maintain the trails. The HCC sponsors an annual Trails Day Event (first Saturday in June). We could use your help – please join us!

The Recreation Management Plan was initiated in 2001. The HCC invited different recreational user groups and adjacent property owners to form a steering committee and together with Town staff, drafted the Recreation Management Plan.

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## The Steering Committee established the following guidelines for recreational use:

- Users will respect the 'tread lightly' philosophy.
  - Safety is a priority.
  - The ecological, historical, and cultural values of the property will be respected.
  - The boundaries of the Town Forest will be clearly delineated in order to respect the privacy of adjacent property owners.
  - The impact on the neighborhood, including noise, litter, traffic, and parking will be limited.
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### **To Tread Lightly:**

*Travel responsibly on designated roads and trails.*

*Respect the rights of others including private property owners and all recreational trail users.*

*Educate yourself by obtaining travel maps and regulations and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.*

*Avoid sensitive areas such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams, unless on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage.*

*Do your part by leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste.*

### **Town Forest Trail Network:**

- The HCC consulted with Vermont Fish and Wildlife biologists to develop a trail network that would accommodate recreational use while minimizing wildlife habitat impacts.
- Authorized trails are marked with painted blazes (see map at left). Do not make new trails and please refrain from using unauthorized trails.
- Some recreational activities are limited to designated trails only, please stay on trails that allow your use.
- Trails continuing onto the HFWR trails are limited to foot traffic. Dogs must be on a leash in the HFWR.

## **HTF RECREATION RULES**

### ***Hours of Use: Sunrise to 10:00 p.m., with the following exceptions:***

- Hunting in compliance with State Law to allow hunters to set up prior to sunrise
- Snowmobile drive-through use of the designated VAST Trail
- Camping by permit only (see below)

### ***Activities allowed throughout the HTF:***

- Hiking/Walking/Jogging
- Wildlife viewing/Bird watching
- Skiing/Snowshoeing
- Ice skating
- Swimming
- Boating (non-motorized)
- Dog walking (Leashes are not required, however a Town Ordinance requires that dog owners keep their pets under control. Dog owners are required to remove dog droppings from the trails.)

### ***Activities restricted to designated trails only (see map on opposite page):***

- Mountain biking
- Horseback riding
- Snowmobiling (in cooperation with the Hurricane Riders)
- All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs): ATVs may use only the specifically designated trails to pass through the forest. The loading and unloading of ATV's at the trailhead parking area is prohibited

### ***Activities requiring permission from the Town:***

- Orienteering events
- School/Educational activities
- Special events
- Camping
- Campfires
- Commercial activities

### ***Activities requiring a State License/Registration:***

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Snowmobiles
- ATVs

### ***Prohibited in the Town Forest:***

- Target shooting/Random shooting
- Trapping
- Off-road trucks, jeeps, motorcycles and other motorized vehicles
- Alcohol consumption

# WILDLIFE IN THE TOWN FOREST

## BIRDS:

American Crow  
Blue Jay  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Mourning Dove  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Brown Creeper  
Tufted Titmouse  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
White-throated Sparrow  
Eastern Towhee  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Indigo Bunting  
Northern Cardinal  
Scarlet Tanager  
Ruffed Grouse  
Turkey  
Turkey Vulture

## Ducks:

Mallard  
Wood Duck

## Finches:

American Goldfinch  
Purple Finch  
Pine Siskin  
Common Redpoll  
Red Crossbill  
Evening Grosbeak  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak

## Flycatchers:

Eastern Phoebe  
Great Crested  
Eastern Wood-Pewee

## Hawks:

Red-tailed  
Red-shouldered  
Sharp-shinned  
Northern Shrike

## Owls:

Barred  
Great Horned

## Thrushes:

American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
Hermit Thrush  
Veery

## Vireos:

Blue-headed  
Red-eyed  
Yellow-throated

## Warblers:

American Redstart  
Black-throated Blue  
Black-throated Green  
Black and White  
Blackburnian  
Magnolia  
Yellow  
Yellow-rumped  
Common Yellowthroat  
Ovenbird

## Woodpeckers:

Downy  
Hairy  
Pileated  
Red-bellied  
Northern Flicker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Generally, the larger the undeveloped block of land, the greater the diversity of plants and animals. The HTF is one of the largest undeveloped parcels in town and part of a much larger contiguous expanse of forestland. It provides a wide range of habitats suitable for most of the wildlife indigenous to this part of Vermont.

This remote, forested property provides ideal habitat for upland forest mammals. It is also an important wildlife travel corridor that wide-ranging mammals such as moose, black bear, deer, and coyote use to move safely from one large habitat block to another as they pass through Hartford and into neighboring towns. The forest provides ideal habitats for our many colorful and secretive neotropical migratory bird species. The abundant streams, wetlands, and vernal pools are home to many amphibians and aquatic organisms.

To help protect and enhance wildlife habitat in this special place and to assist with future forest management, the HCC recently decided to prepare a Wildlife Habitat Plan to go along with the Forest Management Plan and Recreation Management Plans.

## WHAT IS GOOD WILDLIFE HABITAT?

All wildlife requires cover, food, and water. Providing these basic elements alone does not provide good habitat for all species—every species requires a specific type and arrangement of cover, food, and shelter. Providing good wildlife habitat for diverse species, therefore, requires a diversity of plants, landscapes, foods, and wetlands.

- **Cover** is the protective element, important for hiding, traveling, resting, breeding and rearing young. In the HTF, cover is primarily vegetation but also includes ledges, rock outcroppings, caves, burrows, snags, and den trees.
- **Food** is vital for maintaining the animal's health, growth, and reproduction. All species have preferred foods, which vary with the seasons and the particular needs of the animal. Foods found in the HTF include insects, fruits and seeds, such as berries and acorns, tree seedling twigs and buds, herbaceous plants and of course, other animals.
- **Water** is an essential requirement for all life. Sources of water in the HTF include two old reservoirs, several streams, wetlands, and vernal pools.



## MAMMALS:

Black Bear  
Chipmunk  
Coyote  
Fisher  
Moose  
Porcupine  
Raccoon  
Red Fox  
Red Squirrel  
Skunk  
Snowshoe Hare  
White-tailed Deer

## AMPHIBIANS:

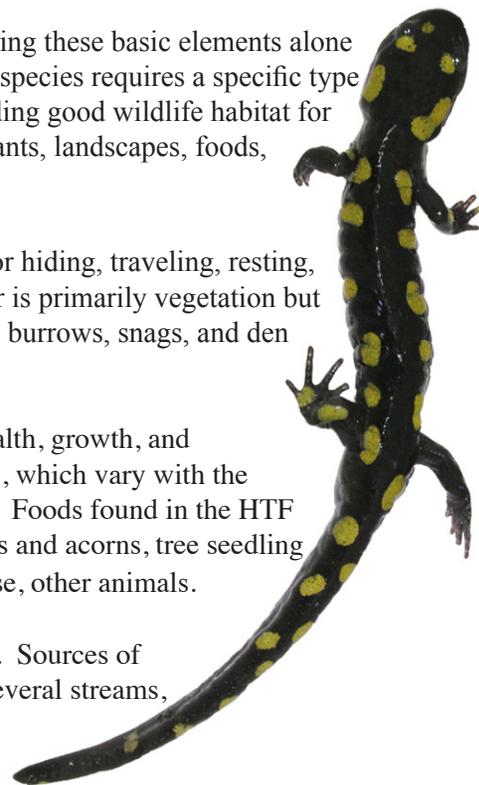
Eastern Red-backed Salamander  
Jefferson Salamander  
Blue-spotted Salamander  
Yellow-spotted Salamander  
Red-spotted Newt  
Bull Frog  
Gray Tree Frog  
Green Frog  
Wood Frog  
Spring Peeper  
American Toad

## REPTILES:

Black Racer Snake  
Ribbon Snake

## AQUATIC ORGANISMS:

Backswimmer  
Caddisflies  
Daphnia  
Dragonfly nymph  
Giant Water Bug  
Isopod  
Mosquito Larvae  
Predacious Diving Beetle  
Water Scorpion



Just for fun we're making a list of the wildlife species found in the HTF. While certainly not complete, it starts to give us a picture of who lives in and depends on the forest. This information was compiled from a UVM graduate student survey, the Hartford Memorial Middle School Classes, and Judith Lombardi. THANKS!

## How many species have you seen?

We invite you to help us. If you see wildlife in the Town Forest, and they are not included on the lists, please contact Matt Osborn, 295-3075, (mosborn@hartford-vt.org) and they will be added to our growing list of HTF residents and visitors.