

# Young Forest Initiative

*An update of activities benefitting young forest wildlife*

## Return of historic species



*Chestnut-sided warbler by Paul Fusco*

*If you build  
it, they will  
come*

The Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary once belonged to an avid birder named Margery Boyd. She kept a daily record of the birds she saw and heard on her property for thirty one years. After her death in 1992, her heir donated Boyd’s 102-acre property to the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society (LHAS), of which she had been a member for years.

The Boyd family bought the property in 1927. At the time it was farmland, which grew into old field and shrubland habitat during the 1950s-1980s, and eventually into mature deciduous forest. By the time the LHAS received the property in 1992, it was 90% mature forest.

In her birding notebooks, Margery Boyd recorded 185 species of birds, including many shrubland species. Some of those shrubland species were common in her lifetime, but are now species of greatest con-

servation need (GCN) in Connecticut.

In 2005, the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to do a 5-acre cut. Half of the cut was left to grow back with shrubs, while the other half was planted with conifer trees. Shrubbyland birds like blue-winged warblers and eastern towhees eagerly occupied the 2.5-acre patch. The decision to cut down trees was not an easy one, but the abundance of songbirds using the habitat patch make it a vital part of this wildlife sanctuary.

In 2014, the LHAS teamed up with the DEEP Wildlife Division and our conservation partners to make an 8-acre cut, and in 2015 to cut an additional 4 acres. Staggering the cuts over a period of several years allows different stages of young forest regrowth, which in turn provides habitat for a greater variety of birds and wildlife.

LHAS members and land stewards Debbie and Rich Martin were instrumental in creating these habitat patches. Although they were initially hesitant to cut trees on the property, as they learned more about shrubland habitat they became enthusiastic advocates of the New England Cottontail project. For their outstanding efforts to create shrubland habitat and their public education and outreach, they were awarded Certificates of Recognition from the New England Chapter of The Wildlife Society.



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By Rich Martin

by wetlands, a brook, a pond, and a vernal pool. The early successional patch has added to this rich mosaic of habitats Boyd Woods provides.

This makes it ideal habitat for American woodcock, which require a mosaic of habitat types. Woodcock need shrubland, open fields, forest, and moist soils. When woodcock don't have to travel far to meet all of their needs, they are exposed to fewer predators and are thus more likely to survive and reproduce successfully.

### Boyd Woods Today

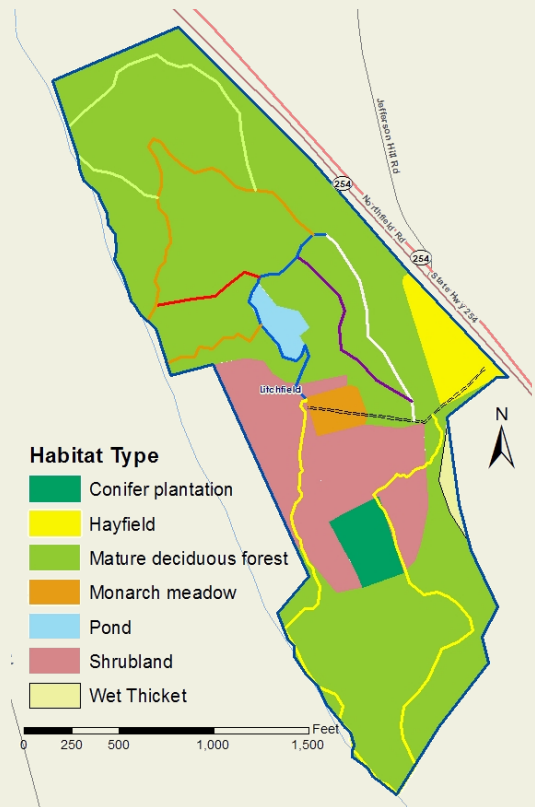
Since the earliest eBird records for Boyd Woods in 2009, 120 species have been recorded at the sanctuary. Twenty five of these species are shrubland-dependent birds that breed in Connecticut, fourteen of which (56%) are GCN species. For some species, like eastern towhee, blue-winged warbler, and prairie warbler, a relatively high percentage of their total populations nest in Connecticut. This means that Connecticut carries a global responsibility for these species.

One of CT's GCN species, the ruffed grouse, was spotted at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary in October of 2017. Debbie Martin, who made the exciting find, saw the grouse in a part of the clearcut that grew back as a dense aspen stand. The grouse has not been seen on the property since then, but hopefully the dense stand of young aspens will attract nesting grouse in the future. Although ruffed grouse were once a common fixture on the Connecticut landscape, they have sharply declined in recent decades and are rarely seen in most of the state.

### Habitat Variety Ideal for

#### Woodcock

Boyd Woods now contains a variety of habitat types, including coniferous and deciduous forest, meadows and fields, shrub-



Woodcock display at dawn and dusk in the spring. Males require a forest opening or a field for this display. They will call repeatedly from the ground, a nasal "peent, peent", before flying up to 300 feet in the air and circling. During this aerial dance, the woodcock stops calling but a sound is produced by specialized wing feathers males have for this display. They zig-zag back to the ground and repeat the process



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Picture from <http://mrines.com/Birds/woodcock/>

possible without the cooperation of private landowners. If you or anyone you know owns ten or more acres of land and would like to join us in our conservation efforts, please contact us!

### Contact Information

For more information, or to discuss a potential project, please contact the following:

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until they have attracted a female.

After mating, females move to upland shrublands, overgrown fields, or young, shrubby forests to nest. Males take no part in rearing chicks, and will continue to display and mate with multiple females. Woodcock eat mostly earthworms and other soil-dwelling invertebrates, favoring places with soft, moist soil in shrubby wetlands or in forests with shrubby understories. Throughout the summer after chicks have fledged, both sexes roost in clearings.

### Progress 2017-2018

The CT DEEP Wildlife Division completed 4 major projects this past winter that will result in 134 acres of young forest habitat on state land. On private lands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) continues habitat management. NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) are expected to fund over 135 acres of young forest habitat on 12 properties. Our efforts to create and preserve shrubland habitat for wildlife would not be

Our office location is:

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The following websites offer further information pertaining to young forest species:

[www.ct.gov/deep/youngforestinitiative](http://www.ct.gov/deep/youngforestinitiative)

[www.newenglandcottontail.org](http://www.newenglandcottontail.org)

[www.timberdoodle.org](http://www.timberdoodle.org)

[www.youngforest.org](http://www.youngforest.org)

[www.ctnrns.usda.gov/cottontail](http://www.ctnrns.usda.gov/cottontail)

[www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/indepth/rabbit)

### What do you think?

We hope you find this newsletter informative and we welcome all comments. To submit recommendations or to unsubscribe, please email: [andrea.petrullo@ct.gov](mailto:andrea.petrullo@ct.gov)

