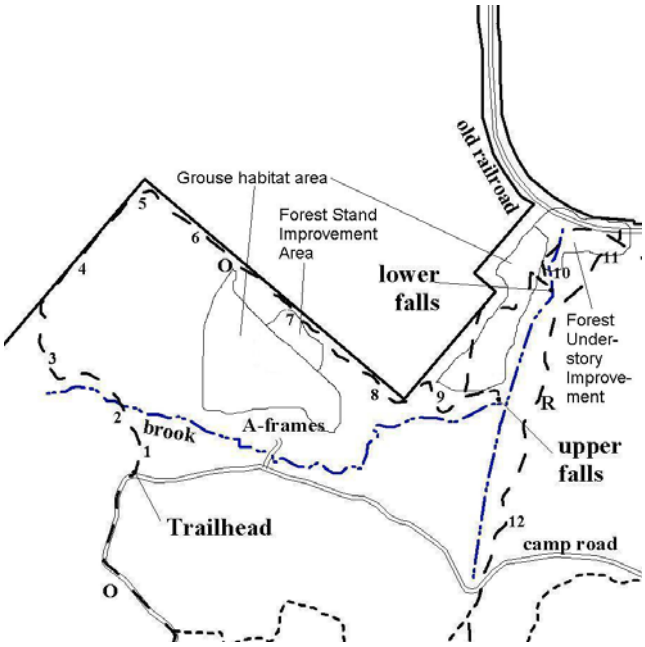
From the Forester: Wildlife Management Practices

Drukker Scout Reservation: Camp Turrell and Camp Kluge
for Fish & Wildlife Management Merit Badge Requirement 4



Forest Understory Improvement

In this wooded area, certain shrubs and plants will be killed, and certain shrubs will be kept. Those shrubs that will be killed include multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, phragmites, and garlic mustard. All of these shrubs and plants are considered to be exotic invasive plants. These plants were introduced to the United States at various times. However, these plants spread rapidly across the landscape, and in many areas have displaced native plant species. This has caused a decline in certain wildlife species that are dependent on native plants for their survival. Therefore, in this area, exotic invasive plants will be killed, and native shrubs, such as lowbush blueberry or mountain laurel will be favored.

Forest Stand Improvement

The cutting under consideration for this area is known as "forest stand improvement." This forest stand is composed of various oaks (52%), black birch (24%), and white pine (11%). Oaks produce acorns, a high-value food for many wildlife species, such as turkey and deer. Since many desirable oak trees are competing with less-desirable black birch trees, a decision was made to cut many (but not all) black birch trees. The trees to be cut will be marked by the forester. The forester will first look at the oak and other desirable trees that the Council wishes to favor. Then, the forester will identify the trees that are competing with those desirable trees for sunlight, and will mark some of them for cutting. Later, in 2006, those marked trees will be cut.

By cutting some of the undesirable trees that are directly competing with desirable trees, additional sunlight will be gained for the desirable trees. As a tree captures more sunlight with its leaves, it can produce more energy from photosynthesis, grow faster, become healthier, and produce more seeds (acorns for wildlife).

Reduction in the Deer Herd

White-tailed deer are a natural part of the forest ecosystem in New York and throughout the eastern United States. However, when one part of the ecosystem becomes too abundant (or not abundant enough), it can affect other parts of the ecosystem. Deer have been overpopulated in southern New York for many years. Deer can damage forests and other vegetation by excessive browsing of young seedlings, and by rubbing their antlers (also known as buck rub) on saplings. Excessive browsing kills seedlings, as can buck rub. Scientific evidence has shown

that deer densities of more than 18 deer per square mile can impact the regeneration of oak forests. In many areas of New York, the current population is double or triple that number. In recent years, the deer population has become so large, that other components of the forest, such as native shrubs and other plants have begun to disappear. In order to protect the wildlife dependent on oak forests and native understory vegetation, a determination may be made as to how to best address this issue. The goal is not to eliminate all deer, but rather to reduce the herd to more normal levels.

Forest Regeneration Harvests: Creating Habitat for Ruffed Grouse

Ruffed grouse is an upland game bird that has very specific habitat needs. During a single year, four different habitat needs must be met in order for grouse to reproduce successfully. Due to a lack of management on public and privately-owned lands, there has been a dramatic decline in the number of ruffed grouse in northern New Jersey/southern New York in the last twenty or so years. This is because several of those habitats require very young forests that are only created after dramatic events, such as clearcuts or other forest regeneration harvests, catastrophic fire, or a large wind event. Here at the reservation, no areas were found to be suitable for the ruffed grouse, or other animals that require young forest habitat.

Since one of the objectives of the Camp Conservation Plan for this reservation is to provide habitat for the greatest number of species of wildlife, it is under consideration to create habitat through a forest regeneration harvest. During the winter of 2006-07, a timber harvest may be conducted in accordance with the approved Camp Conservation Plan. All trees to be harvested will be selected by a forester. In addition, some logs suitable for drumming (an important part of the grouse life cycle) will be left lying within the site. This area will meet all of the habitat needs for the ruffed grouse. In addition, by following the harvest recommendations within the Camp Conservation Plan, as areas of young forest mature and become unsuitable for grouse, they will be replaced by new young forests through timber harvests.

Grouse drumming on log

Conservation of Core Forest Areas

Just as ruffed grouse require young forests, other species require large, contiguous forests. Area-sensitive songbirds are one example of this habitat need. Such animals rarely nest within 300 feet of a forest edge. Roads, homesites, powerline rights-of-way, and forest regeneration harvests all create and/or maintain forest edges. This behavior is partially explained by increased predation of birds and nests by cats, raccoons, and parasites near forest edges. Thus, in planning activities at camp, care is taken to avoid eliminating all core forest areas. This is particularly true for forest regeneration harvests. While a forest will grow back in such an area, it may take up to thirty years for the edge effect created from the initial harvest to disappear.

This brochure was written by the Northern NJ Council, BSA Conservation Committee (last updated 2/2007). For more information on conservation activities within the Council and at Council camps, visit http://www.nnjbsa-conservation.org