

Golden-winged Warbler – A golden opportunity for cooperation

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June 29, 2012

The Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) is a migratory songbird that is experiencing drastic population declines, largely due to the loss of early successional forest habitat used during their breeding season. Timber harvests are a practical way to increase young forest habitat and are an important tool to boost Golden-winged Warbler populations.

In continued efforts to improve habitat management for the Golden-winged Warbler in Pennsylvania, researchers at Indiana University of Pennsylvania teamed up with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture, American Bird Conservancy, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to develop science-based Golden-winged Warbler Forestland Best Management Practices (BMPs). These Forestland BMPs provide guidance to landowners and land managers interested in creating breeding habitat for Golden-winged Warblers through timber harvesting and other forest management practices. Namely, these guidelines emphasize landscapes with high percentages of forest cover and higher elevations. These forested landscapes need to include areas of young forests and edge habitats devoid of Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*), which can cross with the Golden-winged Warbler. Within harvested areas and other disturbed areas, the guidelines emphasize the need for varying amounts of shrubs, saplings, herbaceous plants, and bare ground while retaining scattered trees and snags.

Creation of young forest habitat through these management efforts will not only benefit Golden-winged Warblers, but an array of early successional wildlife like the snowshoe hare, Appalachian cottontail, white-tailed deer, American Woodcock, and Ruffed Grouse. If you are a private landowner with an interest in creating young forest habitat on your land, please contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, DCNR Service Forester, or Game Commission. IUP also has two field planners that are available to work with private landowners, Patick Ciarrochi (724-816-0220) and Kim Van Fleet (717-213-6880).

Both NRCS and the Game Commission have programs to assist landowners with the expenses of implementing forest practices, which can result in early successional forest habitat that is critical to this species' survival. NRCS is targeting Wildlife Habit Incentives Program (WHIP) funds for the Golden-winged Warbler in six south-central counties. However, WHIP and NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) forestry funds may also be available throughout the Golden-winged Warbler breeding range in Pennsylvania.



Photo of Golden-Winged Warbler courtesy of Jeff Larkin, Indiana University of Pennsylvania