

# 2021 Annual Report



# WISCONSIN YOUNG FOREST PARTNERSHIP

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## VISION

Sustainable wildlife populations through  
landscape-scale conservation.

## MISSION

The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership seeks to achieve landscape-scale conservation in Wisconsin for high priority species by **collaborating with like-minded partners**, *promoting and creating young forest habitat through active forest management*, and providing technical and financial assistance to private forestland owners.

# EXPANSION AND SUCCESS

As I reviewed the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership's Strategic Management Plan, I began reflecting back on my years involved with the partnership and it made me smile.

I've been coordinator for WYFP for just over five years now. When I first started, I was welcomed into a group that was eager and focused, but also easygoing and kind. I'm thankful for their support and guidance in my early years as it was a small feat to learn all these different programs, resources, and staff that partners had to offer. Luckily for me at the time, efforts were focused in only six counties, but the goals and outlook for the partnership was much greater.

Year by year WYFP was able to show its worth in the world of private lands management and year by year we had the support to expand a little at a time. While some partners worked on public lands, our impact on private lands grew across northern Wisconsin.

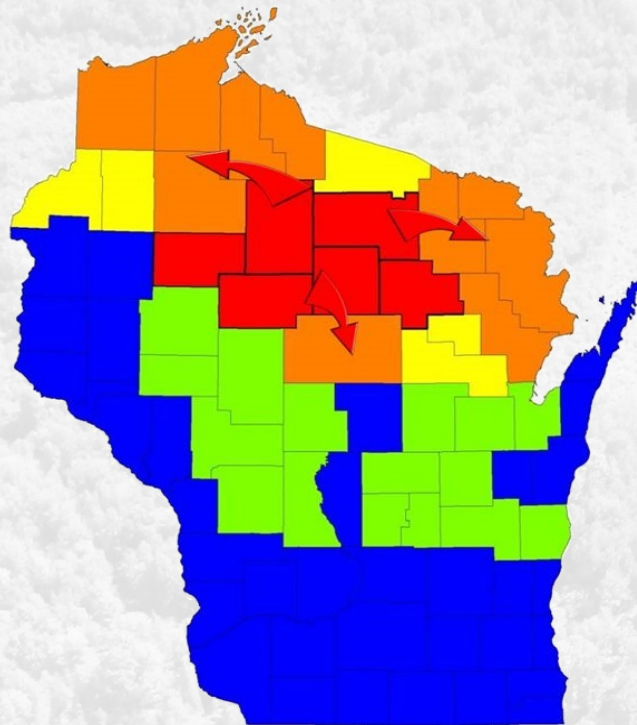
While representatives change within the WYFP steering committee over the years, the support for the WYFP has not swayed. If anything, the support for private lands management and young forest has only become stronger! With our partners and other stakeholders focusing in on private lands, it provided more opportunities for collaboration that lead to an expansion statewide.

Going from six counties to statewide is an amazing accomplishment for the partnership! And a partnership it truly is.

Our success doesn't come from a coordinator, it doesn't come from one agency, it comes from all of these organizations and agencies coming together, communicating with one another, and doing what they do best. Whether it be time, talent, or treasure, we all have our niche.

One thing I love about my job is that things are always changing. There are always new grants with certain deliverables to be met, new initiatives that have us focus on certain regions or certain species, and new collaborations with some pretty amazing folks.

The focus and strategies may shift throughout the years, but one thing that holds strong is the shared passion and connection that this group has. I'm excited to see where we will go in the next few years!




*Red shows the core six county area. Proposed expansions from high to low priority are as follows: orange, yellow, green, blue*



By Randee Smith  
WYFP Coordinator

# ~THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS~

Aldo Leopold Foundation (ALF)  
American Bird Conservancy (ABC)  
Louisiana-Pacific Corporation (LPC)  
Lumberjack RC&D Council  
My Wisconsin Woods (MWW)  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Pheasants Forever  
Ruffed Grouse Society/  
    American Woodcock Society (RGS)  
The Forestland Group, LLC  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)  
Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership (WBCP)  
Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA)  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Wisconsin Society of American Foresters (WSAF)  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF)



“The combined results of several people working together is often much more effective than could be that of an individual working alone.”

- John Bardeen



# HABITAT IMPACT

*With the partnership's expansion, this report now represents partner's accomplishments from **across the state**.*

## LANDOWNERS CONTACTED

**34,709**

## SITE VISITS

**2,804**

## CONTRACTS

**123**

## ACRES OF IMPROVED YOUNG FOREST HABITAT

**1,525**

## MANAGEMENT PLANS WRITTEN

**379**

## ACRES OF IMPROVED HABITAT FROM PLANS

**25,281**

## ACRES OF YF FROM COUNTY, STATE, & FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

**26,368**

# PRIVATE LANDS OUTREACH

*The partnership collaborates with partners to target private landowners to provide technical and financial assistance to improve habitat.*

Our collaboration with My Wisconsin Woods and DNR Forestry started in 2020 and really took off during 2021. Communications with landowners from WYFP and DNR Forestry are inputted into the Private Forest Landowner Database (PFLD) where both parties can view all notes and more efficiently track landowners.

Below is a snapshot of WYFP's impact in the PFLD from 2021:

**119** landowners being assisted from **43** counties

**1,770** acres from **17** landowners who applied to NRCS EQIP for a forest management plan

**977** acres from **17** landowners who received application materials for a NRCS EQIP forest management plan

## REFERRALS

*The partnership connects interested landowners to programs and resources that helps them reach their property goals.*

**61** to Natural Resources Conservation Service

**27** to Managed Forest Law Program

**7** to WDNR Forestry

**3** to WDNR Wildlife

**3** to WI Forest Landowner Grant Program

**101** Referrals in 2021  
**683** since 2014

# DIGITAL OUTREACH

Lumberjack was granted a National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) grant. This grant was for outreach to encourage landowners to apply to NRCS EQIP. Lumberjack partnered with WYFP to accomplish this outreach. The digital media campaign ran in the nine counties covered by Lumberjack from July 1 to October 31.

Versions of the campaign were run through Google responsive search (the ad that pops up when you search in Google), Google display (the ads on the sidebar of websites), and Facebook ads. A landing page on the WYFP website was created to flow with the ads and give landowners a bit more information on who we are and what to expect.

With leftover funds from the NACD grant and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), WYFP ran a different version of a digital campaign and radio ads from October 1 to November 30 to increase reach during gun deer season. The area was expanded further west to include Rusk and Price counties. Photos below show the active ad that rotated through the images.

## RESULTS

Our campaign ads were more than a way for landowners to just learn more. We wanted to encourage those landowners who were ready to

move forward with managing their land to reach out to us through a survey where we would then provide a free consultation call to discuss their land, their goals, and resources available for them.

Targeting landowners who were ready to act and that would fill out the survey is a larger ask than viewing a website or downloading information. Overall, we did not receive many surveys, but we know there are other benefits from digital outreach that is hard to track. WYFP was able to get our name out there, get people thinking about their land and what they may want to do with it, as well as the unknown amount of future referrals. We did learn from the campaigns which photos and messaging performed better on certain platforms which will be valuable for future outreach efforts for WYFP and its partners. Below are some trackable impacts from the campaigns.

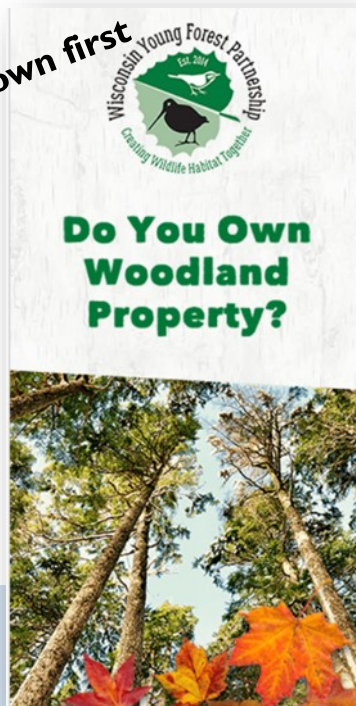
Google campaign drove over 1.6 million impressions and 8,100 clicks

Facebook campaign drove over 470,000 impressions and 3,000 clicks

+78 Facebook page likes

WYFP's website went from max of 28 page views to 157 with 14% of return visitors

Shown first



Flipped to



Ended with



# RESEARCH

## **GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS**

Researchers at the University of Maine completed their first field season working with Golden-winged Warblers (GWWA) throughout Oneida County. In an effort to understand annual survival, particularly for females, 35 VHF-coded NanoTags were deployed on 20 females and 15 male GWWA. These NanoTags will emit frequencies for over a year, and in the spring of 2022 researchers will return to the same sites to detect the deployed tags using telemetry. An additional 40 NanoTags will be deployed on a new cohort of warblers for subsequent detections in 2023.

In addition to deploying NanoTags, the same research team, led by graduate student Emily Filiberti, constructed two Motus towers in the Rhinelander area. These Motus towers are able to read the frequencies emitted by the NanoTags and will serve as an additional detection method. They are also able to pick up any non-target tagged species that happen to fly within range of the towers. Excitement for this Golden-winged Warbler survival project has increased in the past year, and seven new collaborators have joined the NanoTagging effort on field sites across their breeding range.



## **POLLINATORS IN YOUNG FOREST**

The monarch is one of the eight national-level species targeted under NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife. Specifically, WLFW-Monarch works with producers and their conservation partners in portions of the Midwest and southern Great Plains to improve habitat conditions for this migratory butterfly by implementing conservation practices that increase availability of milkweed and other nectar-rich plants. Participating states include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The latter two states are also the focus of an ongoing RCPP to create early successional habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler. Due to similar habitat associations, there is potential that early successional communities restored for Golden-winged Warblers may benefit monarchs. Researchers from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and University of North Carolina-Wilmington are using standard monarch butterfly habitat and population monitoring protocols developed by the Monarch Joint Venture's Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program to assess the degree to which the species may benefit from the GWWA-RCPP in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Specifically, the researchers visited 24 sheared alder and 25 sheared upland sites multiple times from June-August 2021. Analyses are on going and will form the foundation of a graduate thesis.

# WORKSHOPS

## ***FUTURES IN THE FOREST EVENT***

What better way to peak the interest of young minds to forestry than to have them out in the forest itself! Northland Pines school district invited 800+ students ranging from 5-8 grade out to their school forest to hear from a wide range of professionals on October 13th and 14th.

With 15 different booths, students were exposed to a variety of topics such as macroinvertebrates, logging history, music in the forest, nature photography, grading lumber, and buffer zones. Each booth had some sort of hands on opportunity or a demo like touching furs, using a drone, and even letting the students use a stump grinder!

WYFP held their own booth to discuss young forest habitat and the wildlife that uses it while nestled into the recent aspen coppice harvest that surrounded the booth. Not only were the students introduced to a strange creature, the woodcock, they then had the opportunity to become woodcocks themselves.

With hidden gummy worms in a pan full of dirt in front of them, students used a clothespin “beak” to find the gummy worm like how a woodcock would find earthworms in the soil. But to make it more realistic, the students had to keep their eyes closed! The students were paired up with one being the woodcock and the other giving directions to help the woodcock know where to go. Then the race was on for the first group to find three worms! Winners received rice crispy treats and in the end, all students were able to grab a piece of candy.

Of course candy is the way to a middle schooler’s heart. Students told Randee how her booth was their favorite! Hopefully along the way, it made it memorable for them to think of woodcock and the habitat that they need.



## ***ELEMENTS FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT***

Private landowners are always interested in learning about wildlife on their property, so educating the professionals that work with them is key. UW Stevens Point hosted an Elements for Wildlife Habitat workshop on May 20th. This is one of a series of workshops that professionals can count towards the Forest Management for Wildlife Certificate Program offered through the Wisconsin Forestry Center. When a landowner sees that a forester has this certificate, they can be reassured that they are trained in wildlife and not just focused on timber value.

WYFP coordinator, Randee Smith, was invited to be the neotropical expert during the workshop. She gave a presentation on the elements to consider in the forest for neotropical migrants, which is hard to narrow down with such different needs for so many species! Even so, there are certain elements like feathered edging, snags, and various age classes that can be incorporated in all management. Lessons were reinforced with visuals during a field tour at the Treehaven property to discuss habitat and Randee pointed out the bird songs they heard while in the field.

You can learn more about the certificate program at here: [www.uwsp.edu](http://www.uwsp.edu).

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## TREEHAVEN DEMONSTRATION SIGNS

The Wisconsin Forestry Center in collaboration with the Wisconsin Center for Wildlife partnered with the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership and Ruffed Grouse Society to create habitat management demonstration sites. The focus was to provide continuous, multi-age habitat areas that encompass the habitat components important to ruffed grouse and woodcock at the varying stages of their life cycle. The demonstration sites are available for professional development trainings, community events, and self-guided virtual tours of the Treehaven property in Tomahawk, WI. There are extensive trail systems on the property that not only allows visitors to stride through the demonstration area, but explore a variety of habitat types.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more.



## INTRO TO PRIVATE LANDS MANAGEMENT

Where to start is the hardest point for many landowners when beginning their journey of managing their land. As part of Trees for Tomorrow's program series on sustainable living, a workshop was held on December 7th on private lands management. Smith assisted in creating the agenda for the evening and recruited Pat Weber with ABC and Matt Schultz, a cooperating forester, to present.

The evening started out with Weber discussing wildlife needs and actions that landowners could take on their land to benefit wildlife. Schultz then discussed benefits of hiring a private forester to assist in managing their forest, benefits of a forest management plan, and MFL. Smith then rounded out the workshop talking about programs and how cost-share funding can assist them in getting a management plan and implementing practices that were described earlier.

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## ABC HIRES GREAT LAKES PRIVATE LANDS DIRECTOR

Linnea Rowse is the new Great Lakes Private Lands Director for ABC. She oversees ABC's private lands foresters in WI, MN, and MI, implementing RCPP Golden-winged Warbler and Kirtland's Warbler projects while based in Rhinelander, WI. Linnea is an avid birder and has worked in the avian conservation field for more than 15 years. Her passion lies in connecting birds and people while employing ecologically sound science, research, and education to accomplish landscape-scale bird conservation.



## RGS/AMW HIRES NEWEST FOREST WILDLIFE SPECIALIST

RGS/AWS welcomes Stefan Nelson as the newest Forest Wildlife Specialist who will be based out of the Antigo NRCS office. Nelson has previously been employed with the WDNR and UFWS on multiple projects involving conservation, working with private forest landowners, and addressing forest wildlife management goals. In his new role, he will work with NRCS staff, partner organizations, consulting foresters, and other agencies to assist private forest landowners in managing their forests for wildlife.



## RUFFED GROUSE AND US LIR

While cancelled the previous year from covid, the Learning in Retirement group continued their program through zoom. Smith presented on all things ruffed grouse from their physical traits to life cycle to habitat needs. She touched base on getting involved by doing drumming counts and creating habitat. This was a great way to connect with the community and for them to familiarize themselves with this little bird they didn't know much about yet is right in their backyards.

## NRF GWWA FIELD TRIP

May 29th Smith hosted a Natural Resources Foundation birding field trip with Callie Bertsch from ABC. Members came to the Northwoods to learn about GWWA conservation and young forest habitat. The group hiked through the Lake Tomahawk demonstration area and observed a variety of bird species, including the GWWA, to the delight of the participants.



## ADVANCED COVERTS REUNION

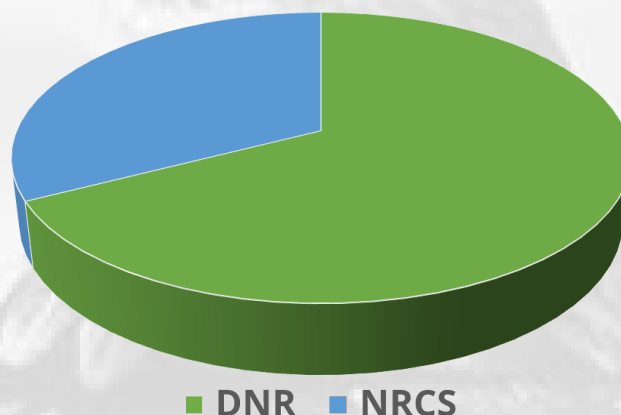
On August 23rd, landowners who previously went through the coverts training were invited to further their knowledge through presentations and hearing from a variety of groups during an exhibition. WYFP coordinator, Randee Smith, hosted an exhibition booth to discuss with landowners about young forest habitat and passed out information on BMPs for young forest, GWWA, and woodcock.



# FINANCIAL

The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership's fiscal sponsor, Lumberjack RC&D, signed another 3 year contract with DNR and NRCS to receive funds to support the WYFP coordinator position and operational costs. WYFP is grateful for such wonderful partners to keep the partnership running smoothly to benefit wildlife conservation and the landowners that are such a vital part of our efforts.

## WYFP 2021 Revenue Sources



## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022

### LANDOWNER OUTREACH

WYFP looks forward to working with DNR Forestry and My Wisconsin Woods to continue their collaboration to assist landowners. WYFP is able to efficiently assist landowners with cost-share programs when receiving referrals of those ready to move forward on the landowner continuum. More digital outreach or mailings to targeted landowners are anticipated for this upcoming year.

### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

With the signs placed at the Treehaven property, it will make a prime location to host field trips and workshops to showcase young forest habitat work for professionals and the public. With in-person events becoming more common again, WYFP looks forward to participating in events that are fitting to educate and encourage young forest habitat and its associated species.

### GRANTS

There is a natural eb and flow of funding through WYFP partners. We look forward to see what grants partners are able to secure and where WYFP is able to support or be more actively involved to fill deliverables.

# CREATING WILDLIFE HABITAT TOGETHER



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