

April 2025

12 Months of Wildlife Management

From Joe Roy, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

April

Vernal Pools

Invasive Species

Soil Testing

Live Stalking

Learn Your Birds

April

April is when the ground has thawed and the snow is gone through much of the state, and at least at the start of the month we still find ourselves in mud season. Seasonal streams, also known as ephemeral streams, are running to convey water during this we time of year. We all know the saying “April showers bring May flowers” and this will be apparent by all the mud. You will begin to hear more songbirds this month, as some of our breeding birds return to their nesting grounds, while others stopover in our state as they head to points further north. This is a great time of year to be active on your land if you have wildlife in mind! But remember, the ground will still be easy to rut during this time of year, so you will want to be mindful of how you move around your lots and what equipment you are using.

If you have been keeping up with my monthly checklists, you should be ready for a productive spring of wildlife management. All those nest boxes that you have prepared may be getting their first occupants

soon. If you haven’t put them out yet, you should get them out early this month because the birds will be here soon! Hopefully you have already ordered your seeds and plants, and they will likely be shipped and arrive sometime this month. If not, no fear, many Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other organizations will be having their native plant sale’s sometimes this month. Ordering later in the year may mean you have less to chose from, but you should still be able to find some native plants nearby to add to your property.



Vernal Pools

Last month we talked about vernal pools and how they may begin to show themselves as the snow melts. Well in April, those pools should become apparent, and their seasonal inhabitants will begin to migrate to them to breed. These pools are shallow, forested depressions that often only hold water during the spring. They are considered significant habitat in Maine and provide the essential breeding conditions for species like wood

frogs, spotted salamanders, and blue spotted salamanders, as well as others.



During the month of April most of the state will begin to see the egg masses of some of these species in their vernal pools, so keep an eye on your pool for these! Identifying, avoiding, and minimizing impacts to these pools is an important undertaking this month. The hydrology, and topography of these pools are very important so it is critical to avoid disturbing the pools, especially in the spring. In many pools you will see fallen trees and limbs, be sure to leave these in place, they benefit the species who use the pools.

Invasive Species

During early spring is when our invasive plant species become easier to identify. Many of these plants, especially shrubs in the understory, have leaves that emerge before most of our native plants. This can be a really good time to identify them on your woodlot and field edges. Getting a handle of what you have present and what the extent is during this time can help you plan for the summer. Invasive plant species occupy space in our landscape at the cost of our native plant species that wildlife benefit from. Eradicating and

containing invasive plants are an important part of management. Early detection of these species can make management much easier in the long run. The Maine Natural Areas Program has extensive online resources to identify and address invasive species.

Soil Testing

In April you may be thinking about your vegetable garden, and getting your seedlings started. It is still too early through much of the state to plant anything at risk of being impacted by a frost, but you will likely need to test your soil before you get started for the year. The same is true if you are planning on planting a food plot for wildlife. Food plots are areas where you plant vegetation that is desirable for wildlife forage. They are often made up of non-native, non-invasive plants like chicory, clover, and various brassicas. The first step before planting any food plot should be site prep and soil testing. Collecting a soil sample now and testing it will tell you what amendments you need to make to the soil and be successful. Soil tests can be ordered online, bought at a local hardware store, or attained through your local University of Maine extension office.

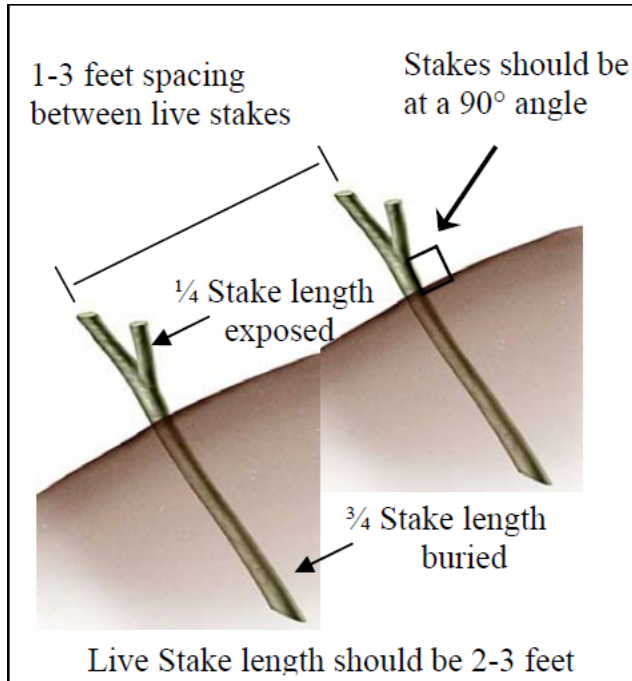
Live Staking

Live staking, is an inexpensive and effective way to grow shrubs beneficial to wildlife. This is where you cut a branch from a desirable plant and stake the branch into the ground elsewhere to grow a new plant. Not all species of plants can be live staked into the ground but in Maine some species that can include all our willows, dogwoods, viburnums, and button bushes. When collecting stakes, make sure you are outside of the growing season, early April is good through most of the state. If you want to collect stakes off of your own property be sure to have landowner permission. Select a 2-3 foot section of a desirable branch that is .5-1.5 inches in diameter. Make sure the branch has buds or other small twigs within that length. Cut the lower, thicker end at a 45 degree angle and the top end flat. Find a wet/moist area where you want to introduce the stakes and pre-plunge a whole with a section of rebar. Insert the angled end of the stake and place at least 18 inches of the stake into the ground. The more the

better. Make sure to place your stakes within 24 hours of harvesting. If that is not possible, soak the angled cut ends in water until you can place them in the ground. Spacing between stakes varies a bit by goals and species composition but generally 3 feet between stakes is sufficient.



Joe Roy is the Private Lands Wildlife Biologist for Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. Contact Joe at: joseph.roy@maine.gov or (207) 592-3344. Find more resources online at beginningwithhabitat.org



This newsletter article was originally written for our partner Small Woodland Owners of Maine.

Learn Your Birds

Spring is a great time to learn your birds. Our migrating birds trickle in slowly and as the early arrivals get here, it is easy to narrow down which species they are. Some of the first to arrive are our Pine warblers and Palm warblers. There are lots of great resources to learn your birds including field guides, and phone applications like those produced by the Audubon Society or Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Meril, an app produced by Cornell, can identify birds by song for you as well as by photo. Keep your eyes and ears open this month!