Forest Wildlife Specialist

Hoosier National Forest · Indiana

Location: Tell City, Indiana | Hoosier National Forest

Supervisor: Zach Evans, Eastern Great Lakes Forest Conservation Director

Region: Eastern Great Lakes

Position: Full-time, 5-year funding and contingent on continued funding

Salary: $44,000–$68,000 annually

Outreach Open: October 30, 2026

Outreach Closes: November 30, 2026, or until filled

Build Your Forestry Career While Making a Difference for Wildlife

Want to prepare timber sales, participate in prescribed burns, restore wildlife habitat, and learn alongside U.S. Forest Service professionals? At RGS & AWS, your fieldwork will contribute directly to healthier forests and better wildlife habitat throughout southern Indiana.

Why This Role Matters

The Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society (RGS & AWS) partners with the Hoosier National Forest to turn active forest management into real conservation results. Timber management, prescribed fire, invasive species control, and non-commercial restoration all help create diverse forests that support ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and other wildlife.

We are hiring a dedicated Forest Wildlife Specialist to increase on-the-ground capacity for this work. You will prepare timber sales alongside USFS staff, support habitat treatments, and take part in prescribed fire activities. Over time, you will gain the skills and qualifications to take greater ownership of field assignments and assigned restoration projects.

This is a chance to build a broad professional foundation rather than work in only one forestry specialty. You will join a mission-driven conservation team, work across the Hoosier National Forest, and see how technical forestry work translates into lasting habitat improvements.

What You'll Accomplish

Timber Sale Preparation and Administration Support — Approximately 50%

- Assist USFS personnel with timber cruising, marking, boundary flagging, sale layout, and related inventory work using approved prescriptions and protocols.
- Support timber sale administration through field visits, contractor coordination, inspections, and accurate sale documentation within assigned authority.

- Develop proficiency in field forestry techniques and progress toward applicable USFS Region 9 Cruiser qualifications and greater independence with assigned tasks.

What success looks like: Assigned timber sale work is accurate, timely, and advances forest management objectives; technical responsibilities increase as qualifications and experience develop.

Non-Commercial Wildlife Habitat and Invasive Species Work — Approximately 25%

- Assist with implementation of non-commercial wildlife habitat, forest restoration, wildlife opening, and invasive species management projects.
- Work with RGS & AWS and USFS colleagues on treatment planning, field layout, scopes of work, bidding, contractor coordination, and quality inspections.
- Build skills in project budgets, scheduling, and contractor management, with opportunities to assume independent responsibility for assigned projects over time.

What success looks like: Assigned restoration work advances efficiently and meets approved treatment specifications and funding requirements.

Prescribed Fire Implementation — Approximately 15%

- Participate in prescribed fire operations as a crew member when qualified and authorized, following USFS direction and all applicable safety requirements.
- Complete training and work toward necessary wildland fire qualifications, including Red Card qualification as appropriate to assigned duties.

What success looks like: The employee becomes a safe, dependable contributor to prescribed fire operations and makes measurable progress toward required qualifications.

Project Coordination and Reporting — Approximately 10%

- Maintain accurate project records, field data, accomplishments, and required documentation; communicate schedules and concerns promptly with RGS & AWS and USFS staff.
- Support project meetings and limited outreach as needed, while maintaining the primary focus on conservation implementation.

What We're Looking For

Must-Haves

- A degree in forestry, wildlife management, or a closely related natural resources field.
- Ability to reliably identify southern Indiana tree species in both leaf-on and leaf-off conditions, including seedlings and saplings.
- Fundamental understanding of forest ecology, silviculture, and wildlife habitat management principles.
- Basic GPS, map-reading, and field data collection skills; willingness to learn required inventory software.

- Sound judgment, attention to detail, strong communication skills, and the ability to work productively with diverse USFS and RGS & AWS colleagues.
- Ability and willingness to work in remote, physically challenging forest settings, variable weather, and around field operations; willingness to obtain required technical qualifications.

Experience That Would Set You Apart

- Timber cruising, marking, forest inventory, or timber sale preparation experience.
- Exposure to prescribed fire, chainsaw work, invasive species treatments, or non-commercial habitat restoration.
- Experience with ArcGIS, forestry inventory software, contractor oversight, budgeting, or public-land management.

You do not need to arrive with fire, chainsaw, pesticide applicator, or USFS cruiser certifications. The selected candidate will be expected to pursue qualifications appropriate to the work, potentially including prescribed fire/Red Card, chainsaw, Indiana pesticide applicator, and USFS Region 9 Cruiser credentials. Training opportunities depend on agency requirements and availability.

Work Environment and Benefits

The position is based at the Tell City Ranger District office and involves travel throughout the Hoosier National Forest. Expect approximately 75% fieldwork and 25% office-based work. The schedule generally follows USFS working hours, with flexibility to meet fieldwork, prescribed fire, and project demands.

Annual salary is $44,000–$68,000 depending on qualifications and experience. Benefits include paid time off; medical, dental, and vision insurance; retirement options with employer contribution; a work vehicle or approved mileage reimbursement depending on availability; a purchasing card for authorized expenses; and necessary work equipment, computer, and phone. Continued employment depends on available funding.

Join Us

If you want to grow your forestry skills while helping deliver tangible conservation results, we would like to hear from you. Submit a resume and cover letter to ZachE@RuffedGrouseSociety.org with the subject line “Hoosier Forest Wildlife Specialist Application.” Questions: (412) 463-8305.

Employment Information

Employment is contingent upon verification of eligibility to work in the United States (E-Verify) and successful completion of a required federal background check.

RGS & AWS is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other protected status under applicable law.