

Boy Scouts Create Golden-Winged Warbler Habitat at Resica Falls

The Challenge:

The Cradle of Liberty Council of the Boy Scouts of America established a conservation committee to develop a forest management plan for its Resica Falls Camp in eastern Pennsylvania. Working with resource professionals, the committee learned about the opportunity to create golden-winged warbler habitat. Golden-winged warblers depend on early successional forest landscapes for optimal habitat. Forests in the early stages of succession provide the structure, seed sources, and greater plant species diversity that some species need to thrive. Golden-winged warbler populations are in general decline across their range in part because this type of habitat is becoming less common. Forest landowners may therefore need to actively manage their forest property to create this desired habitat.

The Solution:

The council wanted to restore part of the forest at Resica Falls Camp for golden-winged warbler habitat. Resica Falls was heavily timbered in the 1980s, and gypsy moths heavily damaged the oaks in the early 2000s. The council placed Resica Falls under a conservation easement in 2006 with Natural Lands Trust. In 2010, the council developed a Forest Stewardship Plan with a goal of establishing an early successional ecosystem. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service awarded cost-share funding to the council in 2013 to create and improve habitat for the golden-winged warbler.

Since 2013, the council has partnered with the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Game Commission, American Bird Conservancy, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Natural Lands Trust, and Woodland Management Services, Inc., to carry out activities guided by the camp's Forest Stewardship Plan. These efforts included removing invasive plants, shrubs, and less desirable trees; treating heavy fern cover; and thinning trees to meet golden-winged warbler habitat requirements.

Resulting Benefits:

- Established over 200 acres of breeding habitat for golden-winged warblers.
- Removed invasive plants on over 75 acres.
- Completed forest stand improvements on 150 acres.



The Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp Forest Stewardship Plan recommended forest thinning to create golden-winged warbler habitat. (Photo: Robert Hartman, Boy Scouts of America, Cradle of Liberty Council)

“The Boy Scouts of America have been a great partner for us to work with, creating hundreds of acres of young forest habitat that is already providing nesting habitat for several golden-winged warblers. This project not only benefits young-forest wildlife, it also provides an excellent opportunity to teach youth about the importance of young forest and sustainable forest management.”
 Emily C. Bellush, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Golden-Winged Warbler Biologist

Sharing Success:

- This early forest succession restoration project provides a model for camp organizations interested in forest stewardship and enhancing the ecosystem services provided by camp property. It also provides environmental learning opportunities for camp participants.
- The conservation committee chairman gave a presentation to forest landowners at the Southeast Pennsylvania Forest Resource Association in October 2015.
- The council is currently creating interpretive signs that explain the camp's forest restoration activities, which will be used for summer camp environmental merit badge instruction.



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