



## 2008 DELAWARE WILDLIFE HABITAT EVALUATION PROGRAM JUDGING CONTEST LEADER'S GUIDE

The 4-H Wildlife Habitat Judging Contest is an event designed to teach youth the fundamentals of wildlife management. Although it is a competitive event, its primary function is education. Natural resources management is learned through participation in the contest and associated activities. Additional benefits are the development of leadership capabilities and meeting youth, adults and wildlife professionals throughout the state. In this program, youth will learn that management of wildlife means management of wildlife habitat and providing for the needs of wildlife.

The 2008 county contest will include a junior and a senior contest. The junior contest is designed for 4-H'ers age 8 to 11. The older 4-H'ers and experienced junior 4-H'ers should participate in the senior division. **NEW this year**, the senior participants will be asked to make habitat recommendations about which wildlife management practices to use for specific wildlife species after reading a given scenario. The top 10 seniors from each county will participate in the state contest at the Delaware State Fair.

Since 1997 participants in the wildlife judging contest have been exposed to the following wildlife species: American Kestrel, Butterfly, Beaver, Bluebird, Bluegill, Bull Frog, Brown Thrasher, Canada Goose, Common or Lesser Nighthawk, Coyote, Eastern Cottontail, Eastern Gray Squirrel, Fox Squirrel, Frog, Great Horned Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Hummingbird, Large mouth Bass, Mallard, Mink, Mourning Dove, Northern Bobwhite Quail, Raccoon, Red Eyed Vireo, Sparrow, White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey and Woodduck. Participants should be familiar with these species, as some may be included in the contest.

**The junior contest will include:**

- **Wildlife Foods:** Participants must be able to recognize 10 wildlife food items and list the foods that Butterfly, Sparrow, and Bass consume.
- **Aerial Photographs:** Participants are given a set of four circled areas on an aerial photograph and are asked to rank them for a wildlife species (Eastern Cottontail). Additionally they must give written reasons justifying their ranking for Eastern Cottontail.
- **Habitat Recommendations:** Participants are asked to select from a list that will be given which wildlife management practices that are used for the Wood duck. The regions used for this section are Southeast Mixed and Outer Coastal Plain Forest, Urban, & Wetland.
- **Wildlife Management Practices:** 4-H'ers will be given photos of 4 wildlife management practices (rooftop / balcony gardens, pond construction, plant trees and shrubs, and artificial feeders) and asked to identify them.

**The senior contest will include:**

- **Wildlife Foods:** Participants must be able to recognize 10 wildlife food items and list the foods that Great Horned Owl, Butterfly, Eastern Cottontail, Sparrow, Wild Turkey, and Bass consume.
- **Aerial Photographs:** Participants are given a set of four circled areas on an aerial photograph and are asked to rank them for a selected set of 3 wildlife species (Wild Turkey, Bass, and Eastern Cottontail). Additionally they must give written reasons justifying their ranking for Eastern Cottontail.
- **Habitat Recommendations:** Using the scenario provided participants are asked to determine which wildlife management practices are necessary to improve an area for each of the wildlife species listed. Please see pages titled On-site Habitat Management Recommendations for a sample of this activity and for more information. The species are Wood duck, American Kestrel, and White tailed Deer. The regions used for this section are Southeast Mixed and Outer Coastal Plain Forest, Urban, and Wetland.
- **Wildlife Management Practices:** 4-H'ers will be given 9 photos of wildlife management practices and asked to identify them.

**Materials needed for training:** Obtain a copy of the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Handbook by the National 4-H Council from your local 4-H Agent. This manual contains the animals currently being studied and region information that refers to areas in Delaware, Southeast Mixed and Outer Coastal Plain Forest, Wetlands, and Urban.

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## **Activity III**

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### ***On-site Habitat Management Recommendations***

**Activity III, worth 30 points,** addresses the prescription of *Wildlife Management Practices (WMP's)* necessary to improve an area for each of the wildlife species listed. A blank scorecard is shown on page 130. Space is provided to write in the species and practices (with corresponding numbers) recommended for judging in the *Regions* section of this handbook. If more than one region is being used, copies of the score card can be made. Only practices that are appropriate for the specific contest being administered should be written in the spaces provided.

In urban contests, the following practices and numbers should also be used.

- U1. Do not disturb nesting places;**
- U2. Plant flowers;**
- U3. Rooftop balcony gardens;**
- U4. Use pesticides carefully.**

The practices shown above are not in the *Management Practices* section, but are discussed in the *Wildlife Species* section under the appropriate species. Look at the table on page 47 to see which species these practices may be used for.

Leaders and participants will be informed of the region(s) and species that will be used for any national contest well in advance of the event. The area(s) may be shown to the judging team by an on-site visit or with a series of pictures.

The scorecard for Activity III is completed using information found on the tables in the *Regions* section and from the *Wildlife Species* and *Wildlife Management Practice* sections. The appropriate box for all WMP's that would improve the area for each species listed on the scorecard should be marked with an "X."

Consider each species separately. For example, WMP's for deer would not be the same as those for bluebirds. Prescribe only the appropriate practices that have been listed as applicable for the species. These practices are found in the *Wildlife Species* section or on the Practice table in the *Regions* section.

This activity can be used in both urban and rural areas. Any of the practices can be used in both areas. Prescribed practices in urban areas should not be limited to the urban oriented practices listed above. This is just a list of practices that are more appropriate for urban areas which are not described in the *Wildlife Management Practice* section.

Cost or other land management objectives should not be considered.



Assume that all species listed on the scorecard are present in the area. Also, it must be assumed that the area is large enough to support all listed species.

**Example:**

Suppose the area we are judging is 300 acres of all stage 6 hardwood woodland in the Eastern Deciduous Forest Region, and turkey is the wildlife species of concern.

By reading about the turkey in the *Wildlife Species* section and looking at the table included with the Eastern Deciduous Forest Region description, we determine that practices 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 41, 42, 43, 45, and 46 are commonly used for managing turkey in this region. From these practices, select the appropriate ones that will improve the habitat and are otherwise appropriate for turkey in the area described above.

We should not mark the box for wildlife management practice (WMP) number 2 because there are no open areas. Although prescribed burning is commonly practiced in stage 6 woodlands in this region, we do not know the condition of the herbaceous vegetation (understory). Therefore, we would not mark practice 5. Because the area is all stage 6, we would not check WMP 6 or 9. We do not have enough information about population status so we cannot check WMP 8, 16, or 46. However, we do need to know the current status to help us better manage for turkey, so we would check WMP 12. This area does not have any agriculture (remember it is all stage 6), so WMPs 14 and 41 do not apply. Again, because we do not know if livestock are on the area or not, we would not check WMP 17. We would plant food plots (WMP 19) because food plots are maintained as annual or perennial openings and turkey require open areas. We would not mark practice 20 because the stated effect of clear-cuts is to revert stage 6 back to stages 2, 3, and 4 of plant succession. There are plenty of trees already, so WMPs 21 and 22 are not needed. We would mark practices 42 and 43 because there are no openings at present and based on turkey habitat requirements, they need only one-third to two-thirds of the area in stage 5 or 6 of succession. We do not have information about water, so we cannot mark WMP 45. So, with the information given, the boxes marked would be practices 12, 19, 42, and 43.

## CONDUCTING TRAINING IN YOUR CLUB

DO MAKE THE TRAINING FUN. GET THE 4-H'ERS OUT TO WHERE THE ACTION IS – PARKS, FORESTS, STREAMS, AND PONDS – SO THEY CAN SEE THE HABITAT AND HOPEFULLY THE ANIMALS AND IF NOT OBSERVE EVIDENCE OF ANIMALS.

### **Wildlife Habitat in Delaware**

Delaware is identified as being part of the Southeast Mixed and Outer Coastal Plain Forest, Wetlands, and Urban regions. The wildlife species for 2008 include Great Horned Owl, Butterfly, Eastern Cottontail, House Sparrow, Largemouth Bass, Wild Turkey, White-tailed Deer, Wood duck, American Kestrel and Eastern Gray Squirrel. The wildlife foods for 2008 are fruits and berries, insects, nuts, grain, buds, birds, earthworms, snails, nectar from flowers and small mammal. The wildlife management practices for 2008 are rooftop / balcony gardens, livestock grazing management, pond construction, plant mast trees, plant trees and shrubs, corridors, artificial feeders, snags, dead, down woody material, water developments for wildlife, pond construction, nesting boxes / structures / platforms, and wildlife damage management.

1. Wildlife Management Concepts and Terms – A visit (field trip) to a park, a wooded area, stream, pond, wetland or other outdoor area so that 4-H'ers can see first - hand the six plant succession stages and eleven concepts.
2. Common Wildlife Food – Take 4-H'ers on a walk in a park, wooded area and along the banks of a pond or stream. Point out the various foods and the types of wildlife that consume them.
3. Habitat Recommendations– While on the field trip, 4-H'ers should study the management practices required to provide appropriate habitat for animals. At State 4-H'ers will be given a scenario in which they will have to mark the appropriate management practices needed for that animal in that situation.
4. Aerial Photographs– 4-H'ers will be given four circled areas on aerial photos and asked to rank them as to their suitability for specific animals. Photos for training may be borrowed from your County 4-H Office. 4-H'ers will have to write written reasons for a specified animal to justify why they ranked that animal in that order.

5. Wildlife Management Plan – 4-H’ers will be given a situation in the wetland area for a specific animal (not at the county level). On your field trip ask the 4-H’ers to judge which management recommendations would be appropriate for the specific animal.
6. Get involved in a community project relating to some area of habitat management. This is the best way to learn – do, experience!!
7. Attend the statewide trainings being offered by the Delaware WHEP Committee.

If you have any questions don’t hesitate to call your county 4-H Agent, or Rebecca Marasco at 302.697.3776.