

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## WOODLAND POOL SERIES

This series is designed to introduce the many benefits and joys of woodland pools, with something for everyone. All events are free to the public. You can register online at [www.clctrust.org/woodland](http://www.clctrust.org/woodland)

### Citizen Science & Woodland Pools: Get Your Feet Wet!

Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 12:30pm - 2:30pm  
The Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary  
Old Chatham

### Woodland Vernal Pool Exploration

Northern Columbia County  
Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
Schor Conservation Area - Canaan

### Woodland Pool Exploration

Southern Columbia County  
Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
Ancram

### Conservation Planning For Woodland Pool Wildlife

Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> 9:00am - 1:00 pm  
Roeliff Jansen Community Library (Workshop)  
Hillsdale  
Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Sanctuary and Center (Field Visit)  
Craryville

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conservation Partners Celebration

Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Hosted by: Michael and Barbara Polemis  
Old Chatham

### Young Forest/Shrubland Workshop: Actively managing for New England Cottontail and other Young Forest Species

Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup> 9:00am - 3:00pm  
Stanfordville Library (Workshop)  
Buttercup Audubon Sanctuary (Field Visit)

This workshop will explore the characteristics of young forests, the species they support and the potential for landowners to get funding to manage these habitats. Presenters will include staff from Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cornell, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Landowners

### Woods Walk

Saturday October 5<sup>th</sup> 1:00pm - 4:00pm  
Hosted by: Jim Murray and Eleanor Saunders  
Austerlitz

This walk will take us through a property that is being actively managed for timber and recreational enjoyment, including an extensive trail system. Presenters will include a professional forester, trail builders, and natural resource specialist.

## INVASIVE SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Ask any gardener or farmer if earthworms are good for soil and you'll get a resounding yes! Most, if not all, of the earthworms found in the Northeast were introduced by European settlers, who valued their ecosystem services. But while earthworms do aid agricultural and gardening efforts by creating water-moving tunnels, they can cause real problems for our forests.

When earthworms invade hardwood forests, they increase soil compaction and decrease water infiltration, which, in turn, increases surface runoff and erosion. Decomposition of leaf litter in hardwood forests results in a thick, spongy layer (often called the "duff layer") that acts like mulch, holding moisture. This layer is important to understory plant species including trilliums and other spring flowers, as it provides protection and nutrients as seeds take

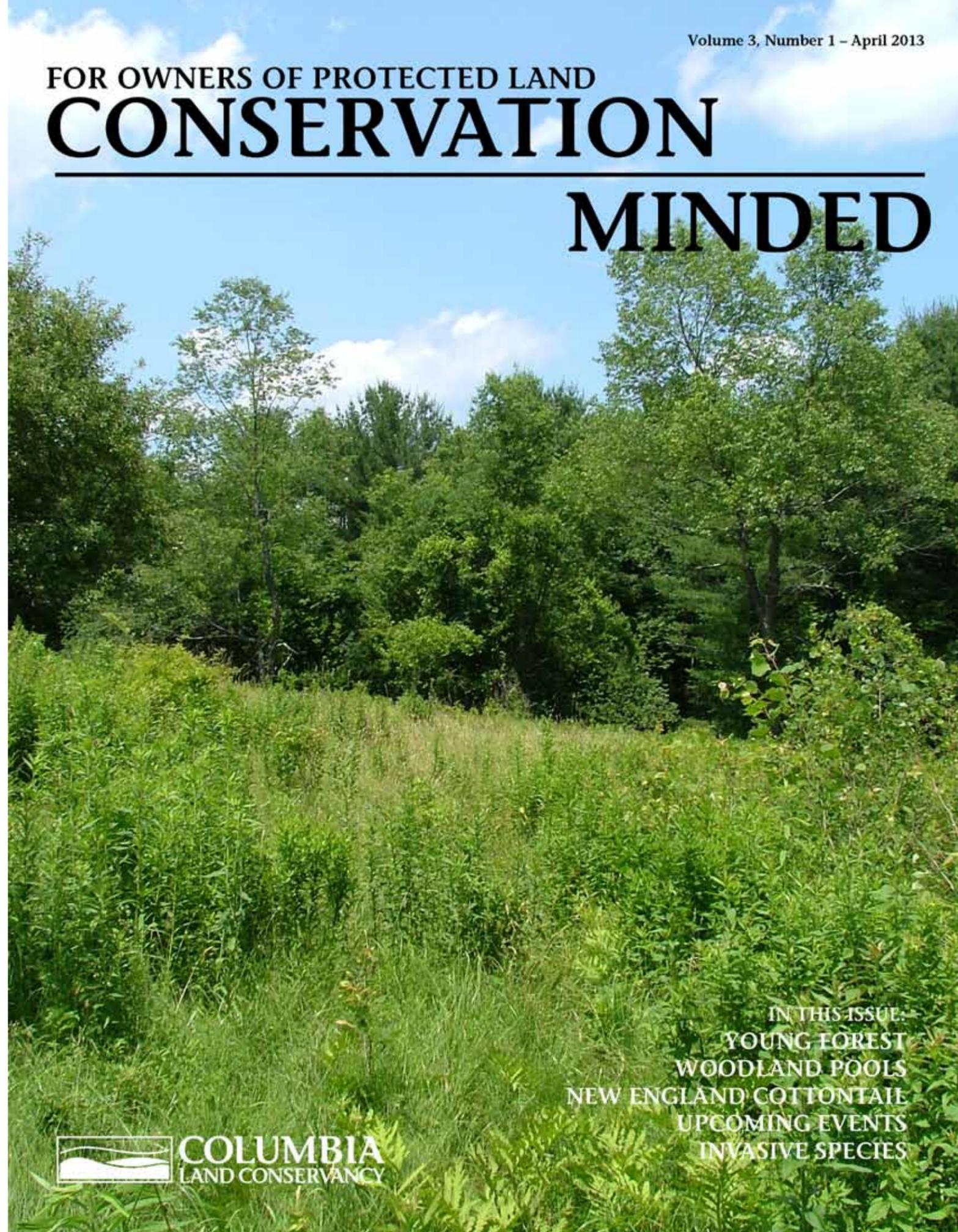
root. When earthworms are introduced into forest ecosystems they act as mini-rototillers, creating dense soil, which has a negative effect on both spring wildflowers and their insect pollinators. That, in turn, affects the forest bird species that rely on those insects for food and leaves the area vulnerable to invasion by non-native plants.

Worms enter forest ecosystems primarily through agriculture, gardening or recreation (without humans, earthworms move very slowly, less than a half mile over 100 years). So what can you do to help keep earthworms out of our forests? Keep worm-composting operations away from forested areas and don't dump leftover fishing worms on the ground.

For more information:  
[www.greatlakeswormwatch.org](http://www.greatlakeswormwatch.org)

# FOR OWNERS OF PROTECTED LAND CONSERVATION

# MINDED



IN THIS ISSUE:  
YOUNG FOREST  
WOODLAND POOLS  
NEW ENGLAND COTTONTAIL  
UPCOMING EVENTS  
INVASIVE SPECIES



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## YOUNG FOREST



Who doesn't love watching a hawk soar across a field, or a turtle sunning himself on a log? Most landowners are interested in attracting wildlife to their property for a variety of reasons, including hunting, fishing and bird watching. And while almost every property provides some habitat for wildlife, the quality of that habitat can often be improved. Read on to learn how and where to create features that'll attract wildlife to your property. But first, a little background on Columbia County forests:

Most of the forests in Eastern New York are made up of mature trees of roughly the same age. While these forests provide crucial habitat for wildlife, many woodland species – including wild turkeys, warblers, thrushes, black bears, white-tailed deer, wood turtles, and the New England cottontail – need younger forests for shelter, nesting and feeding their young. Also known as early successional forests, examples might be an old field growing up with small trees like aspens, maples and birches, brushy thickets with shrubs such as blackberry, hawthorn or dogwood as well as shrubby wet areas.

Succession, the dynamic process by which forests evolve, is essential to maintaining our natural habitat because different types of wildlife require different types of forest. Ideally, there is a well-developed over story, healthy shrubby understory and an herbaceous layer, which together create a woodland structure that's beneficial for a large variety of species. Over time, numerous organisms have evolved under those conditions so there has been great diversity in our woodlands. But now, we are losing early-successional habitats due to natural reforestation of abandoned farmland as well as the suppression of natural disturbances, such as forest fires.

So how can landowners help maintain their woodland's natural structure? Strategies include a well-managed timber harvest or controlled burn, which can mimic events like windstorms and wildfires that spur the growth of saplings and shrubs. Allowing the edge between field and forest to grow up or planting native shrubs and trees is an easy way to create early successional habitat around field edges.

Not all land is best suited as shrubland or young forest. Qualified natural resources specialists, and knowledgeable foresters can help you decide what works best for your property. The good news is no matter how large or small your woods may be, you can increase the number and variety of wildlife species by providing habitat for their different needs. For more information about young forests visit [www.youngforest.org](http://www.youngforest.org)



## WOODLAND POOLS

Woodland pools (a.k.a. vernal pools) are beautiful and peaceful. They also play an important role as amphibian breeding habitat. Most amphibious species, such as frogs and salamanders, spend the majority of their life in the surrounding woodlands and migrate to the small shallow wetlands that occur in forested depressions. These wetlands are not connected to a permanent water flow -- they typically fill with melting snow and rains during the spring, and dry out during the summer. Without fish, the pools are ideal nurseries for developing frogs and salamanders, who, along with a variety of insects, provide an important source of food to other animals, including turtles, wood ducks, mallards, and great blue heron. Woodland pools are also essential to water quality and quantity as they filter surface water, recharge aquifers, and contribute to water storage.

The not-so-good news: Woodland pools and the animal species that depend on them are increasingly threatened by activities that alter the hydrology and substrate of the pools, as well as by significant alteration of the surrounding forest. In New York, wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres are not protected by state or federal regulations and are often overlooked during the planning process. You can help conserve woodland pools on your property or in your town by knowing how to identify them. The next steps are minimizing activities like road building, which can significantly change the landscape and fragment upland forests. That, in turn, can increase soil erosion or interrupt migration corridors between pools. Your mission: Find the woodland pools on your property and then protect them by avoiding habitat alteration and maintaining a natural buffer to reduce run-off and prevent the spread of invasive species into the surrounding wetland.

More information at [www.vernalpool.org](http://www.vernalpool.org). Join us this April for our series on Woodland Pools (see back page for details).

## THE NEW ENGLAND COTTONTAIL

The New England cottontail (NEC) is this region's only native cottontail rabbit species, and is in danger of becoming federally listed on the endangered species list. A close relative, the eastern cottontail was introduced during the early 1900's for hunting, and is the only other cottontail found east of the Hudson River. The difference between the two species is difficult to distinguish even when side by side, which is why the NYS DEC has been collecting fecal pellets to determine the distribution of the two species in Columbia County.

The two don't directly compete, which is a good thing for the NEC since the eastern cottontail is more adept at survival. The eastern cottontail utilizes a wider variety of habitat, produces a greater number of young and is better at detecting and escaping from predators. The New England cottontail is dependent on early-successional habitats, which provide a dense, woody understory of thickets for food and cover. This species prefers large patches of dense cover to the more open fields and gardens in which the eastern cottontail thrives. Unfortunately, habitat loss is one of the principle causes of the NEC's decline.



### To the rescue:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are working with other organizations like the National Wild Turkey Federation to help conservation minded landowners develop plans to improve habitat for this significant species, as well as other woodland creatures. "The thick understory that the cottontail use for cover and food supply is also crucial nesting habitat for wild turkeys", says Doug Little, Regional Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Many declining bird species, such as the



eastern towhee, American woodcock and chestnut-sided warbler also use this habitat for nesting and are important for native pollinators such as butterflies, native bees and bats. In addition to offering benefits to wildlife, well-managed native shrublands are easy to grow and are low maintenance. Many produce beautiful foliage, flowers, berries and seasonal color."

If you're interested in creating or enhancing habitat for New England cottontail or forest bird species, there may be funding available to you through the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), contact Elizabeth Marks ([Elizabeth.Marks@ny.usda.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Marks@ny.usda.gov)) at NRCS to set up an evaluation of your property to determine whether it meets the criteria for funding.

Join us June 29 for a program on NEC/young forest habitat (see back page for more details)

