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12 Months of Wildlife Management

From Joe Roy, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist



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January

January is often a month where we really start to appreciate the hard work put into our woodpiles as the temperatures across most the state really begins to dip. The day are still short, but since we have made it past the winter solstice in December, we are starting to get a little more sunlight. Many of us this time of year have a little more time on our hands to focus on “winter work” since the ground is hard, and if the snow is deep, we can’t do all the tasks we might in other months. This is really a great month to focus on planning for the upcoming year, who knows, a new year resolution may be to enhance the quantity and quality of wildlife habitat on your property!

Evaluate Winter Use

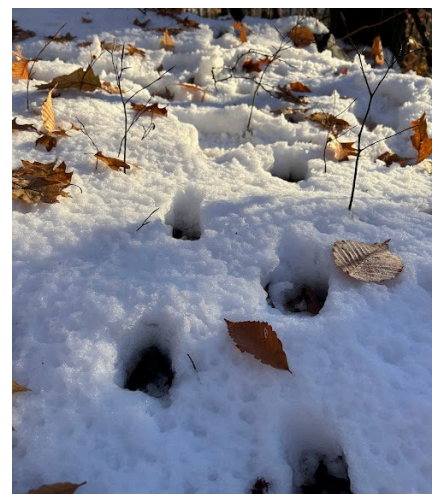
When snow is on the ground it is easy to get out and observe the tracks and scat left behind by wildlife. Evaluating this animal sign on your property can tell you what is using your property, and possibly help you identify important travel corridors to be mindful in the future.



I recommend strapping on your snowshoes and walking through your property and recording what species of tracks you are seeing. This can be done informally by going for a stroll, or you can walk transects

through your property and record the species and the number of times said species crosses your transect. If you find a steadily used game trail, you may want to consider turning on your GPS or and following it while mapping out its track. This can tell you some info about how wildlife used your property and may lead you to some interesting observations.

During this time of year, the browsing behavior of deer, moose, and snow shoe hare can be observed by paying attention to the tips of twigs and vegetation. If you are really lucky, you may find a ruffed grouse snow roost!



Use times when snow is on the ground to see what is walking around your property.

Boxes for Wildlife

While January may not be a good time to observe nesting box use, it is a good time to build new ones or perform maintenance.

Once the ice starts forming, it may be easy to get to duck boxes to clean them out or get to areas to install newly build boxes. With the short days and cold temperatures, it is a great time to build new boxes to be prepared for spring. Once the ground thaws you will have plenty to do, and you will thank yourself if you already have your boxes built and ready. Remember to always be careful when venturing on the ice and ensure that the ice is thick enough for safe travel.



associated with wildlife use.



Planning Your Tree, Plant, and Seed Order

While planting may be months away, it's the month of planning. It is never too early to think about the seeds, plants, and trees you may want to plant in the upcoming year. Find a catalog, get online, or swing into your supplier and start planning what you want to plant and prepare your order. Many places need orders placed before March, so why put it off until later, what you can do today!

Identifying Pruning Needs

While I do not recommend pruning fruit trees in January, now is a good time to identify the trees you may want to prune later in the winter. It is good to get this task on your radar, and helps you establish how much time to budget towards this effort in the coming months.

Record Softwood Inclusions

With the leaves being off our deciduous broad-leafed plants, now is a good time to look for our evergreens to shine. Depending on how active you are on your property, there may be patches of evergreens within your hardwoods that you aren't familiar with. This time a year, they are easy to spot while you explore. Knowing the extent and location of these patches within your hardwoods can be very beneficial since these patches can provide some diversity within the stand that is



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