



# Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

Volume 66 Fall 2024

## NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Rich Chalmers, *Class of 2005 Spring*



“It depends.”

This is the answer one frequently gets, always with a smile, to a question at the Cooperator Training or on a woods walk. It can seem like a frustrating non-answer, especially when we yearn for simple instructions on what to do. But “*it depends*” is in fact both accurate and powerful.

I learned this early in the stewardship of our land when we had Audubon Vermont biologist and Coverts Cooperator Steve Hagenbuch out to do a bird habitat assessment. The areas that looked fine from my human perspective were the areas that needed the most work. The areas that I thought needed to be “cleaned up” were just fine for wildlife.

It made a big impression on me. Instead of wanting things neat and tidy, I needed to look at the woods differently. Attending the Coverts Cooperator Training and many of our workshops over the years has helped me appreciate the complexities of the ecosystems around us. I continue to learn at each workshop I attend.

Despite the complexity, a few big picture concepts are pretty clear. Wildlife likes it messy and diversity is good. How we get there *depends* on the details. It also *depends* on us! The decisions we make on how to manage our forests, what we do and do not do, will affect our future. The combination of education and peer-to-peer networking that Vermont Coverts offers is perfectly suited to help us understand these choices while we work towards healthier, more diverse forests and wildlife populations.

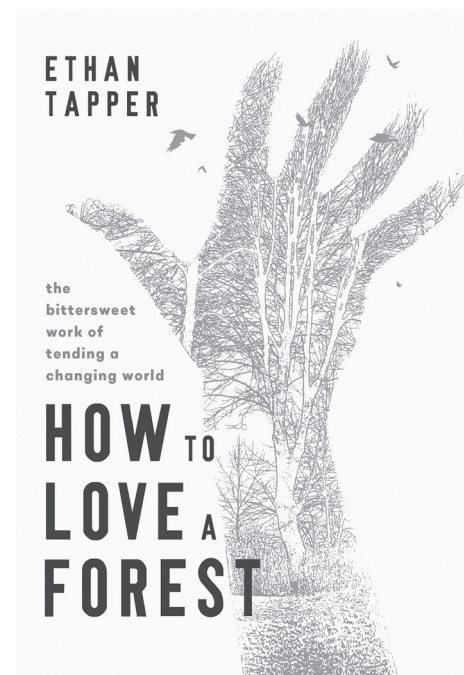
Thank you to those who lead the way; Bob Lloyd for his decades of service to Coverts and conservation in Vermont; Ethan Tapper for his powerful and nuanced exploration of what it means to love a forest; and to each and every one of you who stewards your woods, hosts or attends a workshop, serves on your conservation commission or talks with your neighbor about Coverts and wildlife stewardship.

## REVIEW OF *HOW TO LOVE A FOREST* BY ETHAN TAPPER

John Hawkins, *Class of 2016 fall*

Ethan Tapper’s *How to Love a Forest*, a beautifully written book, has three lessons for me. The first, the story of his efforts to renew the land that he is caring for; the second, woven into his story, about the tactics and techniques he uses (some of them controversial to a portion of the forest loving community) in his efforts; and lastly, but perhaps most importantly, a strong and clearly stated message about social responsibility and social justice.

We are introduced to Ethan Tapper’s thoughts on how to love our forests through the story of his personal evolution. Starting as someone who felt that leaving forests alone was radical and progressive, through personal experience, he becomes someone who can eloquently and convincingly argue that things like cutting trees,



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## NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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As I reflect on the impact of our work together, I invite you to support Vermont Coverts in this year's Annual Fund Drive. Every dollar makes a difference, whether it's funding Cooperator Trainings, hosting workshops, or fostering the peer-to-peer network that makes our community so unique.

Please consider making a gift today—because the future of Vermont's forests and wildlife *depends* on all of us.

Sincerely,



Rich Chalmers, President

## REVIEW OF *HOW TO LOVE A FOREST*

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killing deer, and using herbicide to control non-native invasive plants are necessary to love and revive our forests.

Tapper purchased 175 acres of high-graded, invasive infested, and “broken” land in Bolton, Vermont. His evolution in thinking comes through his work to restore Bear Island, his forest (the forest he cares for), to health and the realization that forests are unimaginably complex, always changing, and in fact need disturbance to remain healthy. As he says, “Your trees are not the forest”. The forest is change and foresters can be thought of as “disturbance ecologists”.

With that as background, Tapper's story takes us through the work he did over many years to restore the Bear Island forest to health. There are many practical lessons that we can take from the story itself. These include lessons about how to handle invasives, how to think about succession, the importance of keystone species, and how all our actions have inevitable consequences. 42% of endangered species are primarily threatened by invasive plants, animals, or insects. However, Tapper's message is that we shouldn't kill invasives because we hate them, but rather because we love the forest.

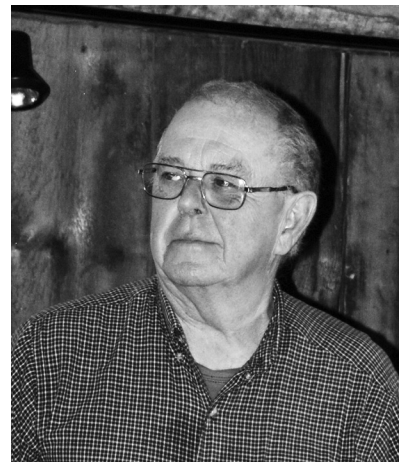
Since it is an ongoing topic that elicits strong feelings, I think a look at what he has to say about patch cuts is illustrative of his approach to responsible forestry. Citing evidence that Vermont's valleys once hosted hundreds of beaver dams per square mile and made Vermont what it is today, he lauds beavers as a keystone species

– on which many other species depended - and effective ecosystems engineers. The clearing that beavers cause, as with our patch cuts, should not be seen as destruction, but as creation of habitat for countless other species. Those of us who have created such patch cuts in the forest we care for can attest to the explosion of bird and mammal life that follows.

Social justice and the benefits we've all received from the taking of native lands and a system that benefits those of us who are privileged enough to “own” forests, is not something one normally finds in a book on forestry, but Ethan Tapper addresses it forcefully and eloquently. He says, we must build bridges to a new and better world, even though we ourselves won't live to see it.

*How to Love a Forest* is a good story, well written, full of useful ideas, but it is, to my mind, most importantly a book that ties our treatment of our forests to concepts of social justice and the common good. As he says, “to love a forest is not enough, we need massive, institutional change” but it starts with planting another acorn. As with our forests, we need to understand that change is something that defines us, a friend and not a foe.

Read this book! If it doesn't change your thinking, read it again!



## ROBERT “BOB” LLOYD: A LEGACY OF STEWARDSHIP IN VERMONT'S FORESTS

Robert “Bob” Lloyd of Tinmouth, Vermont, a dedicated educator, musician, conservation leader and community-

builder, passed away on October 19, 2024. Known for sitting quietly, thinking deeply, and sharing his insights with clarity, Bob's thoughtful approach to land stewardship and conservation profoundly shaped Vermont Coverts and his hometown community.

Bob's journey as a Vermont landowner is an inspiring story of dedication to the land and future generations. His passion for conserving Vermont's woodlands began long before he joined Coverts in 1997. Bob not only exemplified the values of sustainable land stewardship but also led by example, encouraging others to take active roles in caring for Vermont's forests.

In the early 1980s, he played a pivotal role in creating the Tinmouth Land Trust, initiating efforts that led to the protection of 4,500 acres through conservation easements.

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## ROBERT “BOB” LLOYD

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He conserved his beloved Tinmouth property, ensuring its natural beauty and ecological value would be preserved for future generations. His long-standing dedication earned him the 2007 Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership, an honor that reflected his impact on land stewardship throughout Vermont.

As President of Vermont Coverts from 1999 to 2004, and ex-officio Council member through 2024, Bob guided the organization with quiet strength and vision. He championed the implementation of an annual drive, established a fund for giving through the Vermont Community Foundation, and has been involved in the many strategic planning efforts that have strengthened the organization's future. His leadership helped shape celebrations like the 20th and 25th anniversaries, bringing Cooperators together to honor the organization's mission and achievements.

One of Bob's most cherished contributions was the production of a documentary film capturing the stories of Cooperators across Vermont. Bob spent years interviewing Cooperators, piecing together a narrative that illustrated the impact of their work on the state's landscapes. His film remains a beloved testament to Vermont Coverts and the spirit of conservation and can be seen online at the Coverts website.

Beyond Coverts, Bob was deeply engaged in land-use planning at local, regional, and state levels. He served as President of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA), chaired the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, and held various leadership roles in his hometown, including Chair of the Tinmouth Board of Adjustment and Vice Chair of the Planning Commission. Throughout his career, he balanced diverse objectives, unified community goals, and brought a thoughtful approach to planning Vermont's sustainable future.

Bob's commitment to conservation continued even when his health prevented his direct involvement. He encouraged friends, neighbors, and even his grandchildren, Max and Maya, to attend the Coverts Cooperator Training, instilling a legacy of land stewardship within his family and community.

His example is a lasting reminder of the impact one person can have on preserving Vermont's natural heritage. Bob Lloyd's life was a testament to the power of quiet, steady leadership, leaving a legacy that will continue to shape Vermont's lands and communities for generations to come.

## CULTIVATING RESILIENCE: THE ROLE OF BIODIVERSITY IN VERMONT'S FORESTS

Biodiversity — short for biological diversity — is the variety of all living things and their interactions. It is all around us, from the trees in our woodlands to the birds and insects they support, and so much more.

Unfortunately, plant and animal species are declining around the world at an unprecedented rate. Understanding why biodiversity matters and what can be done here at home to address this crisis is crucial for the health of our planet and future generations.

Biodiversity is the foundation of healthy ecosystems. It ensures natural sustainability for all life forms, providing a multitude of services that humans rely on. Diverse tree species, such as maple, oak, and birch, enhance forest resilience to pests and climate change.

Healthy forests provide clean water, air, and carbon sequestration, benefiting both wildlife and human communities. Riparian forest buffers stabilize banks and offer shaded microclimates for fish and amphibians while helping to slow the flow of water during flood events.

Working to see healthy, connected, diverse woodlands in Vermont will enhance our biodiversity. With 78% of our woodlands in private ownership, it is the management decisions on these lands that will directly affect biodiversity.

Vermont Coverts is at the forefront of efforts to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitats and healthy ecosystems. We and other organizations are tackling the biodiversity crisis with continued education and outreach on a variety of topics. Our programs provide resources and training to help people manage their land in ways that support wildlife and healthy ecosystems. By promoting sustainable forestry and habitat management practices we are working to enhance biodiversity. This includes utilizing the practices of ecological forestry.

Efforts are underway to restore habitats that have been degraded or destroyed. This includes wetland restoration, control of invasive species and the creation of wildlife corridors that allow animals to move freely between habitats.

What can you do? Implement the strategies outlined in your forest management plan. Work to control invasive species. Plant native species. Reduce the size of your lawn. Plan how to pass your land on intact to the next generation. Participate in citizen science initiatives. Reduce, reuse and recycle. Support organizations like Vermont Coverts. Share what you have learned through



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# Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife

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## CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

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Vermont Coverts and other conservation organizations with neighbors and friends.

People care about what they know. Share what you know about Vermont's woodlands and wildlife. Be active in our peer-to-peer network.

By working together and making conscious efforts to protect our natural world, we can ensure that Vermont—and the planet as a whole—remains a thriving, vibrant place for all living things.

## FUND DRIVE CHALLENGE

**If Vermont Coverts reaches our 2024  
Annual Fund Drive Goal we will  
receive an additional gift of \$5,000.  
YOUR DONATION MAKES IT HAPPEN!**



**Keep Vermont Coverts growing strong!  
Donate online at [www.vtcoverts.org](http://www.vtcoverts.org)**