

Forestry for Minnesota Birds - Forest Habitat Assessment Worksheet

Date: _____ **Property:** _____

Stand ID: _____ **Stand Size (acres):** _____

Main Forest Type*:

*(upland conifer, aspen-birch, oak, northern hardwoods, lowland conifer, bottomland floodplain forest, bottomland ash)

Dominant overstory tree species (list one or two): _____

Average height of overstory trees (feet): _____ **Average diameter (inches):** _____

Age of average overstory tree (years): _____ **Native Plant Community System*:** _____

*(fire-dependent, mesic, floodplain, acid or rich peatland, wet forest)

Assess the number of canopy gaps you see, estimating the size, and record below:

Small Gap (<0.25 acres or <100 ft x 100 ft)	Medium Gap (up to 1/2 acre or 145 ft x 145 ft)	Large Gap (up to 1 acre or 200 ft x 200 ft)

Average Canopy Cover in the Stand (see reference guide on back page):

	Species (trees, shrubs, plants)	Cover (Low, Med, High)
Overstory:		
Midstory:		
Understory:		
Ground plant layer:		

Softwood Inclusions - retain or promote at least some conifers (e.g., pine, spruce, or fir) in the stand.

Circle one:	Absent	Present	Notes/Species:

Snags - record the number of standing dead trees you see, measure diameter at chest height

Small/Medium >6-12 inches in diameter	Large >12 inches diameter	High quality species?*	Notes:
		Percent of snags	

*Use the leave tree ranking guide on back page

Downed Wood on the Ground - assess logs on the ground

Course Woody Debris	Sparse	Abundant	Notes:
Large (12"+ diameter on big end)			
Small (<12" diameter on big end)			

Leaf litter depth (circle one):

N/A	Poor	Good	Notes:
Needles	<1.5"	>1.5"	

Notes:

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Water - ponds, streams, and wetlands

Water	Permanent	Seasonal
(circle one)	Absent / Present	Absent / Present

Notes:

Invasive Species (note species and abundance, location):

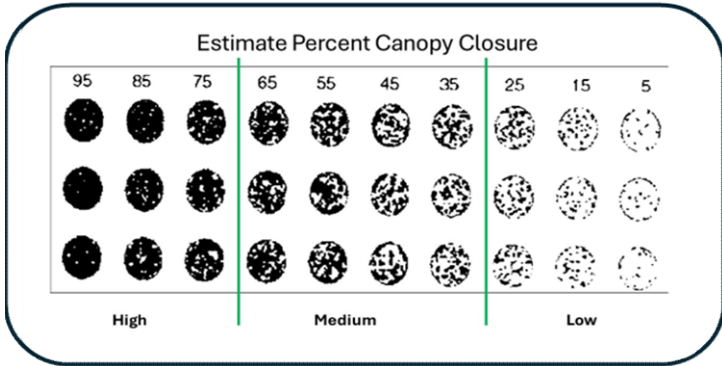
Birds Observed or Heard*:

*Consider using the Merlin app's sound ID feature and record the results here.

Wildlife Signs (observed, tracks, scat, etc.):

Landscape-level notes (adjacent areas with noteable habitat considerations):

Reference Material:



Leave Tree Preferences for Longevity, Wind		
Excellent	Good	Fair
White pine	Red pine	Paper birch
Oaks	Tamarack	Balsam fir
Elms	Northern white cedar	Jack pine
Ashes	Red maple	Black spruce
Sugar maple	White spruce	Balsam poplar
Yellow birch	Black cherry	
Basswood	Hickories	
Aspens	Box elder	
	Cottonwood	
	Black walnut	
	Hackberry	

Dimensions			
Acres	Sq. Ft	Square (feet x feet)	Circle - Radius (feet)
1	43,560	209	118
0.75	32,670	181	102
0.5	21,780	148	83
0.25	10,890	104	59
0.1	4,356	66	37

Example: 1 acre is a square 209 feet by 209 feet or a circle with a radius of 118 feet from the center to the outside.

Important Habitat Elements - Canopy gaps, tree species diversity, cover in different vertical layers, tree size and age, conifer inclusions, snags, large and small downed-wood, leaf litter, water, invasive species, landscape (large scale) considerations.

Forestry for Minnesota Birds - Forest Habitat Assessment Worksheet - Sample Sheet Filled Out

Date: **June 1, 2025** Property: **Sample Forest**

Stand ID: **1** Stand Size (acres): **10**

Main Forest Type: **Upland Deciduous Mixed - Northern Hardwoods**

*(upland conifer, aspen-birch, oak, northern hardwoods, lowland conifer, bottomland floodplain forest, bottomland ash)

Dominant overstory tree species (list one or two): **Sugar maple, basswood**

Average height of overstory trees (feet): **70 feet** Average diameter (inches): **12 inches**

Age, if known (years): **85** Native Plant Community System*: **Mesic-hardwood**

*(fire-dependent, mesic, floodplain, acid or rich peatland, wet forest)

Assess the number of canopy gaps you see, estimating the size, and record below:

Small Gap (<0.25 acres or <100 ft x 100 ft)	Medium Gap up to 1/2 acre or 145 ft x 145 ft	Large Gap (up to 1 acre or 200 ft x 200 ft)
4	1	0

Average Canopy Cover in the Stand (check one for each vertical canopy layer)

	Species (trees, shrubs, plants)	Cover (Low, Med, High)
Overstory:	Sugar maple, basswood	High
Midstory:	Sugar maple, ironwood	Low
Understory:	Sugar maple	Low
Ground plant layer:	Sedges, trillium, jack in the pulpit	Med

this stand may benefit from a more developed midstory and understory

Softwood Inclusions - retain or promote at least some conifers (e.g., pine, spruce, or fir) in the stand.

Circle one:	Absent	Present	Notes/Species: no conifers observed in stand.
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Snags - record the number of standing dead trees you see, measure diameter at chest height

Small/Medium >6-12 inches in diameter	Large >12 inches diameter	High quality species?*	Notes: create more
2	2	Percent of snags	
		100%	

*Use the leave tree ranking guide on back page

Downed Wood on the Ground - assess logs on the ground

Course Woody Debris	Sparse	Abundant	Notes: create more large CWD
Large (12"+ diameter on big end)	X		
Small (<12" diameter on big end)		X	

Leaf litter depth (circle one):

N/A	Poor	Good	Notes:
Needles	<1.5"	>1.5"	

Notes:

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Water - Ponds, Streams, and Wetlands

Water (circle one)	Permanent Absent / Present	Seasonal Absent / Present
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Notes:

Invasive Species (note species and abundance, location): **Buckthorn, NE corner, seed bearing trees and several dozen seedlings.**

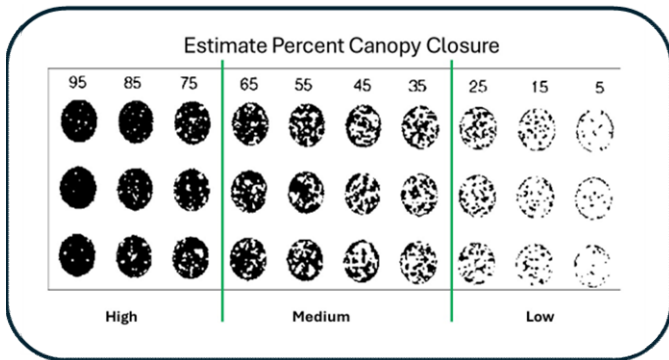
Birds Observed or Heard*: **Black-capped chickadee, hairy woodpecker, red-breasted nuthatch, blue jay, red-eyed vireo, wood thrush.**

*Consider using the Merlin app's sound ID feature and record the results here.

Wildlife Signs (observed, tracks, scat, etc.): **Gray squirrel nests, deer scat and browsed seedlings, black bear scat.**

Landscape-level notes (adjacent areas with notable habitat considerations): **10-acre grass pasture to west, lowland conifer swamp to south, 5-year old aspen stand with no standing snags or older residual trees left on-site.**

Reference Material:



Use this chart to estimate canopy cover, low, med, or high

Dimensions			
Acres	Sq. Ft	Square (feet x feet)	Circle - Radius (feet)
1	43,560	209	118
0.75	32,670	181	102
0.5	21,780	148	83
0.25	10,890	104	59
0.1	4,356	66	37

Example: 1 acre is a square 209 feet by 209 feet or a circle with a radius of 118 feet from the center to the outside.

Use this chart to estimate area.

Leave Tree Preferences for Longevity, Wind		
Excellent	Good	Fair
White pine	Red pine	Paper birch
Oaks	Tamarack	Balsam fir
Elms	Northern white cedar	Jack pine
Ashes	Red maple	Black spruce
Sugar maple	White spruce	Balsam poplar
Yellow birch	Black cherry	
Basswood	Hickories	
Aspens	Box elder	
	Cottonwood	
	Black walnut	
	Hackberry	

Important Habitat Elements -

Canopy gaps, tree species diversity, cover in different vertical layers, tree size and age, conifer inclusions, snags, large and small downed-wood, leaf litter, water, invasive species, landscape (large scale) considerations.