

11 Measuring Progress



Rarely do we appreciate the importance of measuring progress when we begin a new endeavor. Usually, it is only after a few years, when the original details have grown a little fuzzy, that we say, “I wish I had taken some photos before I started, or how much did that big deer weigh, or when did that covey of quail show up on the ditch bank.” The point is that efforts taken up front to document plant communities with photos, keeping a bird journal, or maintaining a hunting diary become more valuable as time passes.

The type of information to record depends on your interests and objectives. But consider maintaining a diary, map, or photographs to record sightings, cover types, bird call counts, before- and after-shots of burns or timber operations, and hunting records.

Songbird point counts, searches for reptiles and amphibians, and plant transects are examples of surveys for which protocols have been developed. Spring quail counts and fall covey counts are used to document quail presence and activity. Recording winter songbird sightings and dates of arrival and departure for migrant birds can become a worthwhile hobby and lead to greater understanding and appreciation of their natural history and habitat requirements. Learning to recognize and record the detection of reptiles, amphibians, or butterflies on your property can provide milestones to measure your management progress. Answering questions, such as “Am I seeing more species that require mature woodlands or grasslands?” will be helpful in evaluating progress. See Appendix C for monitoring protocols.



Keeping a Wildlife Calendar

Your understanding of what goes on around you can be enhanced by recording significant events on a calendar and comparing from year to year such things as rainfall, wildlife sightings, or peak bloom for specific wildflowers. Also, recording your management activities can be helpful for future planning or evaluation of work accomplished.