

SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY ON THE FARM



Importance of Biodiversity

Southwest Nova Scotia is a known biodiversity hotspot, and is also home to 75% of Nova Scotia's species at risk. We are lucky to live and work in a part of the world that is home to so many unique and rare species. However, many of these species are in decline, or at risk of disappearing, from this province forever. Agricultural producers have a unique opportunity to help support biodiversity, as they often care for their land deeply and interact with it daily.

Here we hope to provide some ideas and resources that can help you identify what you're already doing, as well as what else you can do to conserve biodiversity. You will also learn about the ways in which biodiversity can benefit your farm and livelihood.

Benefits of Biodiversity

Promoting biodiversity on your farm has many perks. Not only for wildlife, but for farmers and landowners as well!

- Attracting pollinator species such as bees and other insects can improve crop production and yields.
- Creating space for predators such as birds of prey, bats, and some larger mammals can reduce the presence of rodents and mosquitoes on your farm.
- Planting cover crops has been shown to outcompete weeds, reduce disease and insect damage, prevent soil erosion, as well as limit nutrient runoff. This can lead to an increase in crop health and production in future seasons!
- Forested buffer zones make your farm more resilient to the effects of climate change and storm events by providing stream bank and ground stabilization along with wind protection for crops.
- Wetland habitat can help to filter pollutants and sediment from water and reduce the risk of flooding during storm events.



Application Methods and Tips



Leave Dead or Fallen Trees: Standing dead trees provide habitat for flying squirrels, woodpeckers, and other bird species, while fallen trees provide homes for snakes and small mammals, and return beneficial nutrients to the soil.



Create Critter Homes: Adding a bird, bat or pollinator house to your property can attract other species to live on your land.



Leave Wetlands Undeveloped: Wetlands are often biodiversity hotspots, and can contain rare or threatened species.



Create Buffer Zones: Leaving (or planting) forested buffer zones or hedgerows around water sources (lakes, rivers, wetlands) and in between crops, or sections of your farm, helps improve habitat connectivity for many species.



Limit Livestock Access to Streams: Livestock can increase streambank erosion and damage valuable fish habitat and spawning areas.



Change Mowing Habits: By raising your mowing blades (to a height of 150 mm), delaying your hay cutting (until after July 15th), or avoiding cutting altogether, you can help protect endangered wood turtles and other turtle species that live in Southwest Nova Scotia.



Record Species at Risk: If you are lucky enough to spot a species at risk on your land, note the location, date and time, and snap a picture if possible! Send sightings to the Department of Lands and Forestry (see Additional Resources).

Additional Resources

Creature Home Design Plans

<https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/activities/woodworking>

Biodiversity Landowners' Guide

<http://www.farmbiodiversity.ca/>

Pollinator Garden Tips & Tricks

<https://eastcoastliving.ca/2017/03/calling-all-pollinators/>

NS Species at Risk List

<https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/biodiversity/species-list.asp>

Reports of Rare Species or Habitats

<https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/habitats/hab-data/habitat-report-form.asp>