



THE HEE UPDATE

THE CALL OF THE OWL

“Who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all.” That is the recognizable call of the Barred Owl, a year-round resident of our hardwood forests. It and another resident bird—the Eastern Screech-Owl, prey on small mammals, like mice and voles, which we have been actively sampling as part of the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment since 2007. The ultimate question—How does forest management (harvesting) affect small mammal populations? And to expand that question— How are owls, the predator, affected by changes in their prey base?



Barred Owls have an expansive territory size— around one square mile.



The Eastern Screech-Owl has a much smaller territory size, which is why their survey points are specifically targeted around the recent HEE harvest areas.

Late in 2009, a study was proposed to determine whether landscapes subjected to forest management differ in levels of occupancy or density of Barred Owls and whether sites with various types of harvest openings differ in levels of occupancy or density for Eastern Screech-Owls.

The study consists of two main sampling periods— winter and summer. The winter period runs from December 1st— January 31st for Barred Owls and the entire month of February for Eastern Screech-Owls. Barred Owls will be surveyed again in May and June.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR HEE?

- Eastern Screech-Owl surveys continue through the end of February.
- Spring salamander sampling will soon begin - once all this snow finally melts.
- TSI work will continue throughout the harvest areas.

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Owls...continued

This study extends far beyond the boundaries of the nine HEE management units. Not only is Brown County State Park incorporated, but so are the northern reaches of the Hoosier National Forest, including the Deam Wilderness Area. The study is designed to compare harvested forests (Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests) with historically unharvested forests (Brown County State Park and parts of the Hoosier National Forest). There are 90 Barred Owl survey points across the entire study area and 100 Eastern Screech-Owl survey points with a specific focus on the recent HEE harvest areas.

Surveys are conducted at night, in the cold and snow, at least 30 minutes after sunset. Each survey is a 10-minute point count incorporating three minutes of loudly playing prerecorded owl calls to encourage a response from the birds. Birds are recorded as soon as they are heard or seen. Often-times, they will actually fly in toward the surveyor to defend their territory from the encroaching owl recording.

Something that sets this study apart is the fact that roughly 70% of the surveys have been completed by local volunteers, many from the local Sassafras Audubon Society. After a few recruitment meetings back in November, nearly 20 people had signed up to spend a few evenings standing out in the cold listening for owls. Without this “citizen scientist” component, the work could not possibly have been completed. Thank you so much to all who have participated in this fun study!



Local volunteers travel from point to point and record the number of owls that are seen or heard at each location.



Want to work for HEE?

The Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment will soon be hiring technicians for the fast-approaching summer field season. Please refer any interested parties to the HEE website:

<http://www.purdue.edu/fnr/HEE/People/jobs.htm>

We're looking for anyone interested in gaining hands-on field experience in sampling birds, insects, small mammals, bats, snakes, turtles, and vegetation.

Field housing will be provided.

Executive Committee Update

The Executive Committee met in Indianapolis on November 18, 2009 and at Purdue on February 3, 2010.

- Next Contract— The current contract with the IN DNR-DoF ends April 30, 2010. The committee is still hard at work preparing the next contract. Details to come soon!

HEE Executive Committee Members:

John Seifert, IN DNR - DoF, Co-Chair

Rob Swihart, Purdue FNR, Co-Chair

Scott Haulton, IN DNR - DoF

Rebecca Kalb, Purdue FNR

Duane McCoy, IN DNR - DoF

Mike Saunders, Purdue FNR



NOTE TO RESEARCHERS:

The following items are due to the Project Coordinator by April 1st:

- Annual Progress Reports, summarizing Years 2006-2010
- All data collected— copies of original data sheets, GPS data, files of entered data, and metadata
- HEE Guide sampling protocol updates

Thanks and happy researching!



Do you have pictures from any HEE related event or activity?

If so, you can submit them to the HEE Project Coordinator for archiving. Please include any information about the pictures.

Check us out on the web!

www.HEEForestStudy.org

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Please send your news, findings, tid-bits, publications, funding opportunities, and committee reports to Rebecca at rkalb@purdue.edu to be included in "The HEE Update."

"The HEE Update" is distributed to anyone interested in receiving quarterly updates on the HEE Project—you need not be actively involved in the project. If you know of someone that would like periodic updates on HEE, we can add them to the list!

Previous issues of "The HEE Update" are available on our website:
www.HEEForestStudy.org.