

Managing for Woodland Wildlife

By Clay Smitson

Ask any Kentucky woodland landowner “Why is it important to you to actively manage your woods to make them as productive as they can be?” and you will get many different answers. Some folks want to maximize timber production. Others want their woods to be as healthy and aesthetically pleasing as possible. A large number would probably tell you they want to encourage the presence of more wildlife to enjoy by viewing or to harvest during the hunting seasons. Which answer is the right one?

That’s an easy one, all of them! Woodland management can involve many

overlapping goals that will often merge and, with small adjustments, lead landowners to use nearly the same woodland improvement techniques on their property.

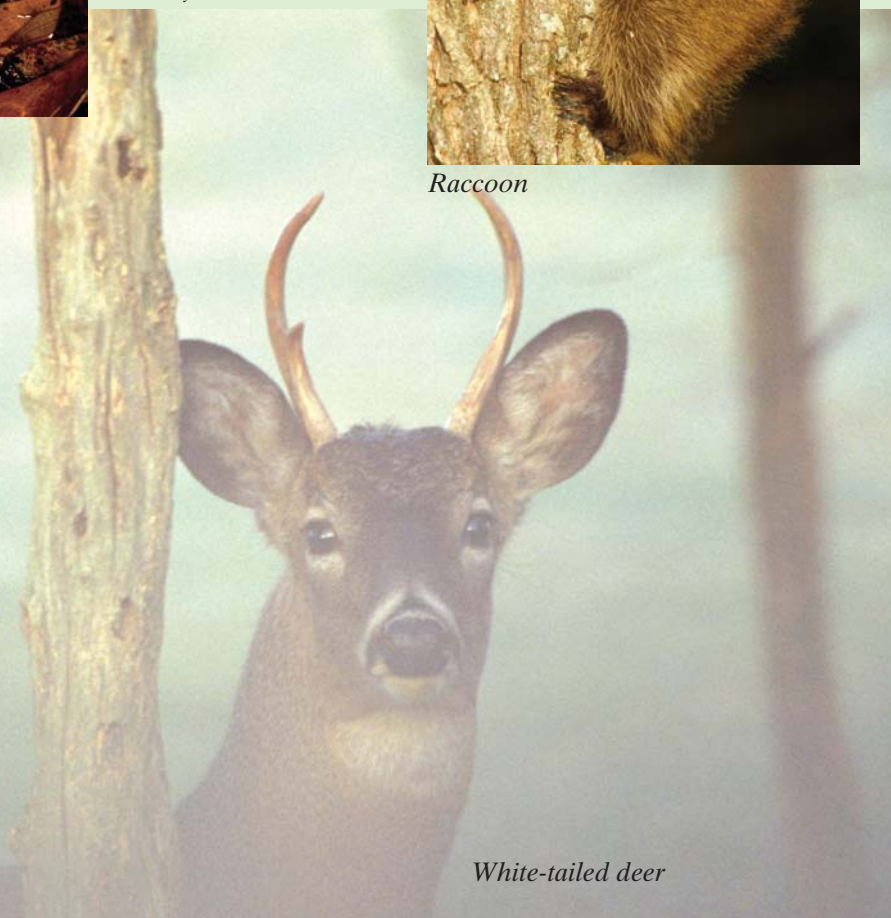
Photos by Thomas G. Barnes



Red-backed salamander



Raccoon



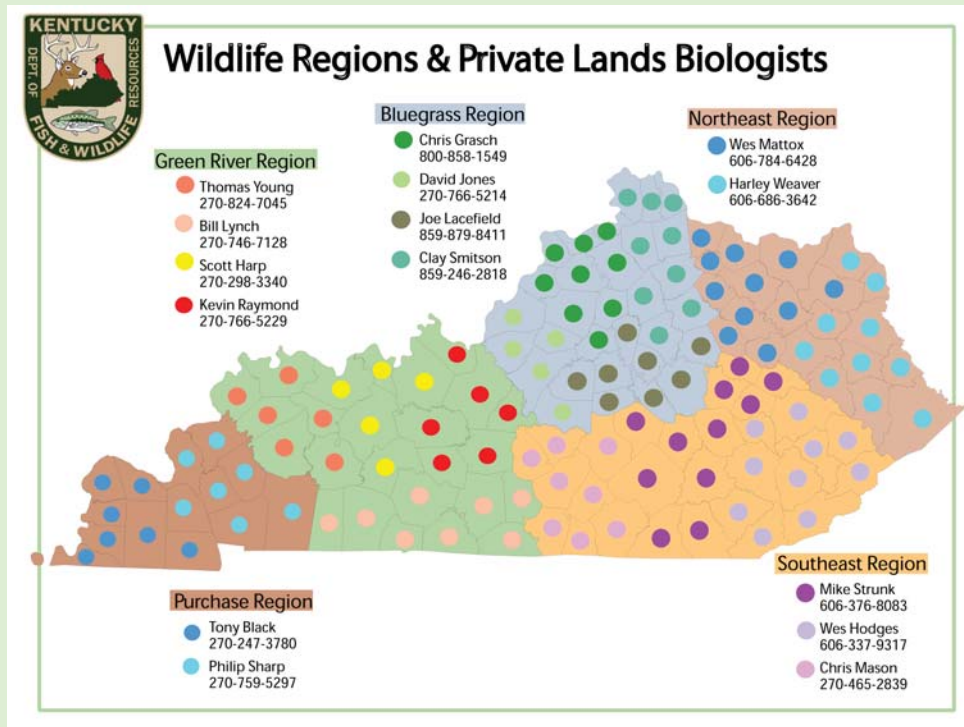
White-tailed deer

While most landowners can identify their primary goals, many are not exactly sure of how to get there, or who can give them advice. From the fellow down the road hanging at the country store to the gentleman logging the neighbor's property, lots of folks have their own opinions of the best thing a person can do for or

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to their woodlands. Another alternative for woodland improvement guidance, which you can read more about in this issue, is the Forest Stewardship Program. The price for both forms of advice is the same, it's free! At no cost or obligation, owners of at least 10 acres of woodland can get professional assistance from the Kentucky Division of Forestry. The Forest Stewardship Plan landowners receive is full of great how-to guidance that helps landowners move from a list of goals to a healthy, productive woodland that supports a wide array of wildlife species.

If you, as a woodland owner, decide to pursue a Forest Stewardship Plan keep in mind you can also request more in-depth assistance on improving wildlife habitat by requesting that a Private Lands Biologist, from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources accompany the Forester on their visit to your property. There are fifteen Private Lands Biologists in Kentucky to offer technical guidance, equipment loans, and even possibly the provision of some herbicide and seed to help complete wildlife habitat improvement projects. We can also focus on any woodland openings or open fields on the property and help convert them into places where wildlife will



Copperhead snake



Photo by David S. Maehr



Black bear with cubs

flourish. Biologists can also help guide landowners through the “acronym soup” of federal Farm Bill cost-sharing opportunities and direct them to the program that best suits their needs. What you’ll soon find out during the property visit is that many woodland improvement practices will be recommended, and agreed on, by both Forester and Private Lands Biologist to help insure that we’ll have healthy forests and wildlife populations across the Commonwealth far into the future.

To locate your local Private Lands Biologist, see the map in this article or call 1-800-858-1549. To learn more about the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources please visit the website at www.fw.ky.gov.

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Mr. Smitson is one of fifteen Private Lands Biologists available to work with woodland owners on their wildlife management practices.

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