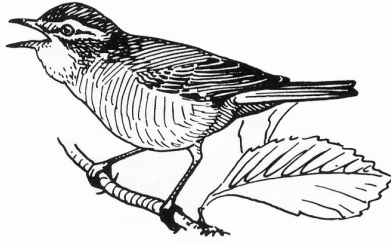


[From Spring 2002]

Tree Thinning: An Exercise in Good Management



The Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR has moved one step closer to their management goal. The refuge property was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Department of Interior in 1984 when it became the Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR. The area, which had long been looked at by Virginia Society of Ornithology researchers as an important migratory bird location, was protected by the government to provide habitat for migratory songbirds and birds of prey.

Since that time, various deconstruction of old air force buildings occurred and ponds were built and vegetation planted. In addition to the planted vegetation, natural succession occurred and the Loblolly Pine became a dominant tree on the refuge. The refuge is now considering the correct management techniques to provide the best food and resting habitats for migratory species.

One of the habitats that is essential to these travelers is the shrub areas. These shrubs (bayberry, chokeberry, sumac, and viburnum) provide fruit which gives birds energy to continue southward. In addition to the small passerines, the birds of prey, such as the Merlin also benefit by hunting around the shrubs.

In light of this information, the refuge has implemented a cutting down of select trees (namely the Loblolly Pine) and encouraging the shrub community to thrive. In February 2002, the refuge had approximately 7 acres of Loblolly Pines removed. Hardwoods, shrubs, and cedars were left when possible.

This area had only been previously used by white-tailed deer and roosting owls, but very few passerines roosted in the pine stands. The removal of these pines will not detrimentally impact these species, since there are numerous pine stands on the Eastern Shore. By removing the pines, the refuge hopes that the area will be open enough so native shrubs can grow into the area and provide the critical energy source needed by the many migratory visitors to the refuge.

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