Biodiversity in Working Forests of western Oregon: An On-the-Ground Perspective

Oregon Society of American Foresters

Annual Meeting

Seaside, OR

26 April 2012

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Maintaining Biodiversity: Challenges

- Opportunities for retention of features that contribute to maintenance of biodiversity has to be balanced with need for ongoing sustainable & profitable harvest levels
- Decisions must be weighed in light of all constraints/drivers, not just biodiversity considerations
- Promote awareness of the value of working forestland vs forestland conversion
- Distinction between habitat conversion and habitat loss
  - Changes in stand age $\neq$ loss of forestland

Maintaining Biodiversity in Working Forests

- This…

- Or This…?

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **Weyerhaeuser Company**
  - ~2 million acres in OR and WA
  - Westside forests
  - Long history of intensive management:
    - 3rd rotation on some blocks
  - Structured Process*
    - Environmental Management System
    - SFI Objectives
    - New Opportunities Informed by Science
    - …plus a little bit of take it as it comes…..

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **Environmental Management System (EMS):**
  - Internal processes for managing the impacts of harvest and harvest-related activities
  - Selected components of the EMS are targeted at maintenance of biodiversity
    - Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species Process
    - Special Sites Process
    - G1/G2 Process
    - OR Invasive Species Identification/Prevention & Early Detection of Invasive Species
- **Relevant components of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® are incorporated into the EMS**
  - Compliance with the EMS ensures biodiversity-related objectives of the Standard are met

The On-the-Ground perspective

Successful implementation of the EMS process requires information

- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species
  - Extensive internal survey program, using staff and contractors, including banding information
  - Data sharing agreements with agency cooperators (ODF, BLM, OR Fish and Wildlife Co-op Unit)
  - Data used to inform decisions about retaining habitat
  - Site-specific management plans are developed for each activity near a protected resource site

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **Special Sites**
  - Ponds, bogs, forested wetlands, springs, cliffs, talus slopes, etc.
  - Also includes sites with cultural and/or historical significance
  - Make up a relatively small component of the landscape yet contribute disproportionately to biodiversity
  - Given history of ownership, new sites are not added frequently, but are as identified
  - Work collaboratively to identify sites
    - TNC – evaluation of oak woodland habitats of high conservation value
  - Site-specific management plans are developed
  - Conservation Easements (TNC)

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **G1/G2 occurrences**
  - Critically imperiled (G1) or imperiled (G2) species and communities
  - Identified through NatureServe
  - Data obtained annually
    - OR Biodiversity Information Center (formerly ONHP)
    - DNR Trax, WDFW, Nature Serve, WNHP
  - Often requires field verification
    - In-house staff: plant ecologists
    - TNC – Fender's Blue Butterfly habitat/occurrences
    - Topic-area experts: riparian loop lichen
  - Once verified sites are accurately mapped
  - Site-specific management plans are developed

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **Invasive Species**
  - Control of invasive species is also important to maintenance of biodiversity
  - Program to identify invasive species
    - In-house,plus external expertise (TNC & OSU) when needed
  - Emphasis on Early Detection: prioritization of resources
  - Includes a training component: maintain awareness of emerging issues

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **New Opportunities**
  - Engaging in collaborative and internal research efforts to identify scientifically-based approaches that contribute to biodiversity
  - NCASI:
    - Intensive Forest Management Project, OR Coast Range
    - Can we modify spray regimes to make more of a contribution to biodiversity and still meet silvicultural objectives?
  - Retained Structures: Phases 1 & 2
    - What gets used and what does not?
    - Where should we leave things?

The On-the-Ground perspective

Goals:

•Understand how to maximize contributions that are made

• Determine where we can take credit for contributions that occur as part of regular operational activities

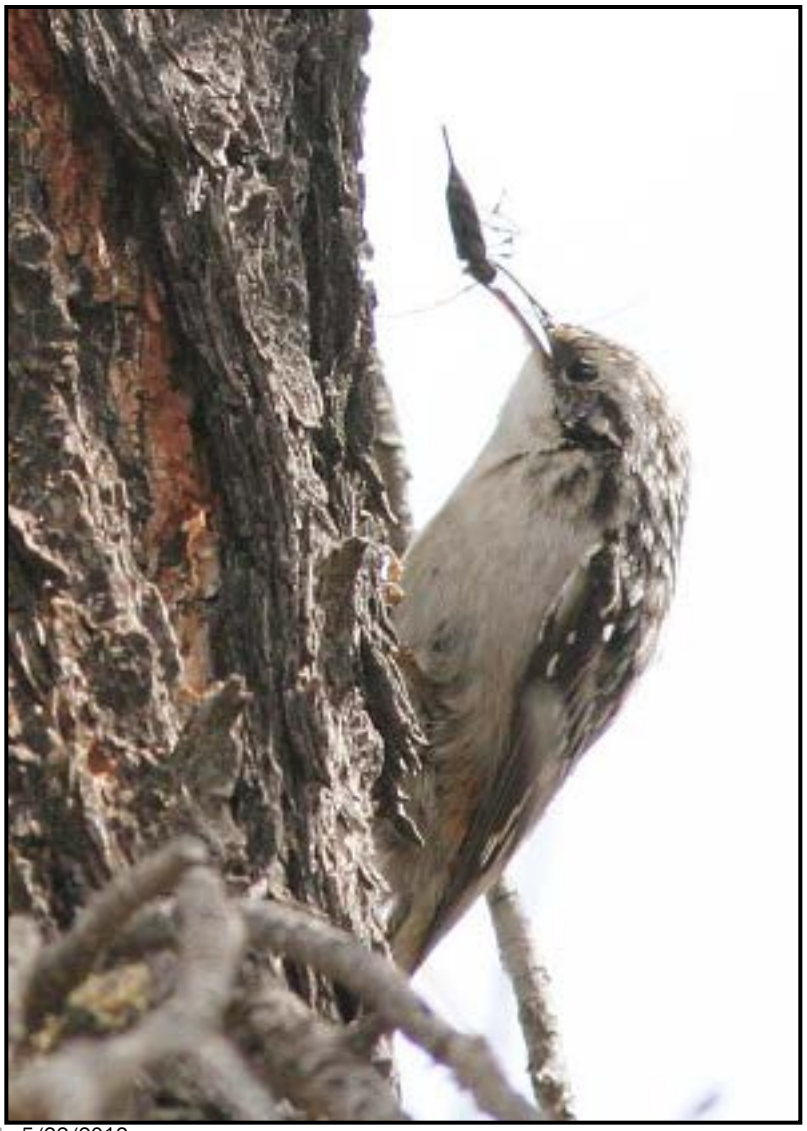
- **More New Opportunities**
  - Oregon State University & Port Blakely
    - Oregon Slender Salamander
    - ODFW Sensitive Species
    - Life History not well known
    - Development of light touch sampling technique as well as presence and abundance estimators
    - Operational prescriptions for predicting presence & possible management prescriptions
  - Oregon State University
    - Pika use of man-made features
    - Cavity-nesting bird project

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **Internal Research***
  - Created Snags Project
  - Initiated 1997→1999
  - 5 year revisit / 10 year revisit, 3 seasons
  - Cavity-nesting birds: nest success and productivity
  - 31 harvest units, 1123 snags created at 3 different densities x 2 spatial distributions
  - 10 spp., 505 nests, 338 successful
  - Spatial distribution influences use, as does landscape context

*OFIC

The On-the-Ground perspective



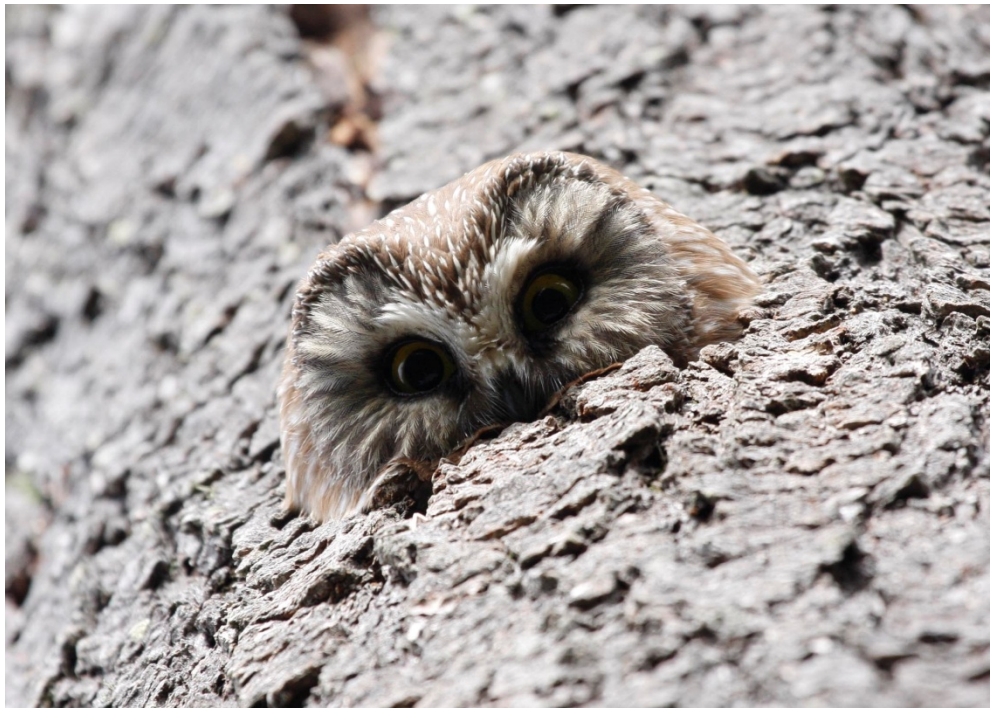
- **Created Snags, cont.**
  - A fix-all? No, but…
  - Operationally safe and practical
  - Demonstrated use by *selected* species
  - Top log goes to the landing
  - Discussions with ODF re: alternate plans
  - It's a tool for the toolbox

The On-the-Ground perspective

- **And finally, take it as it comes**
  - Despite our best effort, we can't control everything that goes on in the forest
  - Sometimes Mother Nature gives us opportunities to do things that may provide incremental value…
  - Most of what we do is structured, planned, documented, etc.
  - But the final part of the strategy is to take advantage of opportunities as they are encountered.
  - Don't do the same thing, everywhere, all the time (Bunnell)

Summary

- **Structured process, primarily:**
  - T&E, Sensitive Sites, G1/G2, control of invasives
  - Well documented, maintains compliance with SFI
  - Engage in research efforts to better understand how to maximize the contributions, in ways that can be implemented operationally
  - Take advantage of opportunities
  - Maintain the balance between BioD and other objectives
  - But, working forests are still forests!



Questions?