BROWN THRASHER
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR HABITAT IN BIRD CONSERVATION REGION 14

Introduction

The Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum)* is a common to fairly common in BCR 14. It prefers low dense woody thickets in the oak, pine/oak/maple or pine communities for nesting or for cover. Thrasher populations are declining as forests mature and low thickets become shaded out (figure 1). It is listed as a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" in the Wildlife Action Plan of at least one State in BCR 14.

Habitat Needs

Preferred habitats include dry thickets, pitch-pine/scrub-oak barrens, brushy fields, forest edges and clearings. Vegetative size classes range from saplings to poles in forested areas or reverting fields and field edges. Drier sites are preferred.

Its territory size is usually about 1.5 acres. There can be a bird per acre in good habitat.

Habitat Management Practices

The habitat management objective for this species would be to maintain as high a percentage as possible in the sapling/pole stages in the pine/oak/maple habitat type. Treatment scheduling needs to be set up so that there is a consistent supply of these habitat conditions across space and time. At least 25 percent of the area in this type should be maintained in the sapling/pole stages and group sizes should average five acres whenever possible.

When assessing properties for habitat potential, look for soils that are excessively to moderately well drained, sandy to sandy/gravelly such as Colton, Adams, Croghan, Machias, Masardis, or Sheepscot in northern areas. Similar soils in southern areas include Boscawen, Caesar, Champlain, Deerfield, Duane, Hinckley, Hoosic, Merrimac, Quonset or Windsor. There are others depending on where in BCR 14 you are working.

Recommended Silvicultural Treatments include:

In even-age stands consider patch cuts ranging from three to five acres in size. A two cut shelterwood system would be another good alternative.

In all-age stands, consider using group selection cuts. The group size should be maximized (3 acres) however.

Schedule entry periods so that at least 25 percent of the total area in this habitat type remains in the sapling/pole stages.

Stands on these soils can be operated in at any time of year. However, soil scarification usually helps to establish oak and pine regeneration so that operating on frozen ground may not be as beneficial. The optimum time to work in these stands would be after nesting season since thrashers typically nest low in the shrub layer.