



New Hampshire
FISH AND GAME
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MANAGING STATE LANDS FOR WILDLIFE

Releasing Apple Orchards

Apple orchards were a mainstay of New England farms. As farms were abandoned, the trees remained and provided an important fall and winter food source for wildlife. Porcupine, beaver, mice, cottontail rabbits and deer consume the bark; grouse and deer consume the buds; and beaver, deer, snowshoe hare and cottontail rabbits eat the twigs and leaves. Deer, turkey, fox, fisher, porcupine, bobcat, coyote, red squirrel, and black bear have all been known to eat the fruit.

Over time, many old orchards became overtopped by taller trees and some have become entangled by the invasive bittersweet vine. This results in poor fruit production. NHFG looks for opportunities to release apple orchards on state lands to maintain that important food source. Competing trees are cut down to open the apple trees up to more sun, allowing the trees' crowns to expand and produce more fruit. Invasive plants are controlled with mechanical and chemical methods. For instance, 14 acres of old apple orchards were released at Max Israel State Forest in Washington, and 5 acres at the District 5 State Forest in Concord.



A group of apple trees released during a winter harvest on the Henry Laramie WMA in Enfield. Brian Lemire photo.

To learn more about managing wild apples, visit [Managing Grasslands, Shrublands, and Young Forest Habitats for Wildlife: A Guide for the Northeast](#).