Understanding Maryland landowner's relationship with wildlife: habitat, damage, economics, and easements

Wildlife is consistently ranked as one of the highest motivations for owning undeveloped land in the U.S. (Bengston 2011; Ferranto 2011; Metcalf 2010), but we have relatively limited knowledge on the specific actions that landowners take or need information about to better steward their properties. Our research seeks to deepen our understanding of landowner conservation practices, including gathering information about specific management practices, barriers to adoption, wildlife damage, economic factors, and conservation easements. This information will serve as a needs assessment to develop a targeted extension and educational program in wildlife management. We are currently conducting a survey of several thousand randomly sampled landowners in Maryland. Given the highly skewed nature of property size ownership (few large landowners, and many small landowners), we are stratifying our sample to ensure robust participation among various size classes of property owners. We will tie the responses to satellite-based land cover maps (USDA Cropland Data Layer) that will provide an independent quantification of land cover on each property to deepen our understanding of how land cover (i.e. forests, agriculture, and grassland) influences conservation and interactions with wildlife. These results will be used to develop a targeted and prioritized wildlife management extension program for landowners in Maryland that addresses a known need in the community.

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Luke Macaulay is a wildlife management specialist for the University of Maryland Extension. His research and extension program covers wildlife conservation, game management, habitat management, hunting, natural history, and wildlife damage. Luke has published 17 peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and extension publications. His earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame. He earned his master's degree in range management and a Ph.D. in wildlife management from the University of California, Berkeley.