

Is Clearcutting Bad for Wildlife?

No! Clearcutting is a harvesting and regeneration method where almost all of the trees in a specific area are cut down. While this may temporarily affect the habitats of wildlife, clearcutting leads to the enhancement of the habitat, which leads to increases in biodiversity. Deer, rabbits, quail, robins, and bees are examples of species that benefit from this practice. Clearcutting of the forests creates new openings that allow the understory plants to get more sunlight, which paves the way for an increase in pollinators. The increased sunlight is also essential for many native grasses and flowers. The growth of the understory in turn leads to an increase in animals, like quails, rabbits, and deer. These animals then consume perennial and annual plants in order to thrive. The openings provided by clearcutting allow shrubs, small trees, berry producing species, and seed producing species to be able to grow more quickly, which provide places of habitat for wildlife. These openings also create edges, which are “pathways” between different habitats. The mingling of different habitats also leads to a more diverse interaction of wildlife species. So in answer to the question, is clearcutting bad for wildlife, the answer is thankfully, no. ■

Whitetailed Deer enjoy grazing in new open spaces created by a clearcut.

Northern Bobwhite Quail eat small seeds, fruit, tender leaves, and insects found in the area of new growth.

American Robins use the blackberries, which grow after a clearcut, as a food source.

American Bumble Bees are attracted to open spaces that allow sunlight to reach and promote an understory full of new pollen and nectar sources.

The thick, new growth of grasses and bushes provides the Eastern Cottontail with food and shelter.