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Effect of clearcutting on the habitat within the clearcut and the surrounding forest and its relationship to the presence of wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) in the Current River Conservation Area

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Wood thrush were one of the few species of forest birds that increased in density on sites that received even-aged management as part of the Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project (MOFEP). One hypothesis is that this may be caused by shifts in vegetation structure, leaf litter production, and relative moisture level between regenerating clearcuts and the surrounding forest. I compared these habitat characteristics for five clearcuts in the Current River Conservation Area. Three clearcuts had adjacent wood thrush territories and two did not. For each clearcut, 5-meter radius vegetation plots were established at six randomly selected points—two within the clearcut, two at a distance of 30 meters from the clearcut's edge, and two at a distance of 60 meters. Habitat characteristics tested at each plot include average leaf litter depth, stem size distributions, horizontal foliar density, percent coverage by five types of ground cover, and relative soil moisture. These parameters serve as a basis of comparison between the clearcuts with and without wood thrushes to indicate what kind of habitat is preferred by these birds when breeding.