

MISSOURI BIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER AUGUST 22, 2014





Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative; More Than Just A Field of Dreams!

By Gene Gardner, Chairman



Our Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) was formally established 11 years ago (August 16, 2003) as a written commitment from 28 organizations to work together to achieve what is called “all-bird conservation.” As we mourn the recent passing of Jerry Wade, our friend, colleague, and a founding father of MoBCI, we can also celebrate his accomplishments for this award-winning partnership that is surely to live on for many more years. Jerry’s vision was for each of us to realize that, although our respective interests in birds are quite varied, our working together in unison could be a powerful force of action to conserve birds and their habitats. I know Jerry was very proud that MoBCI had grown to include 67 member organizations – representing a diverse group of conservation-minded bird watchers, hunters, business owners, academicians, and state and federal agency professionals working together to sustain healthy habitats for birds.

Nostalgia for our organization and pride in what we have accomplished is a way “to check on” or otherwise gauge the performance of our organization, which is one definition of “monitoring.” Jerry Wade, and all the other folks that are committed to MoBCI, developed an Implementation Plan that captured their vision to work together to conserve, restore and protect bird populations. An important aspect of that “Plan” was to secure funding for as many on-the-ground habitat projects as possible; they assumed that providing healthy habitats for birds would increase populations of bird species that were in decline due to a lack of suitable habitat(s). In the field of conservation biology, this is known as the “Field of Dreams” approach. This name was stolen from a metaphor used in the movie with the same name starring Kevin Costner. In the movie, Costner played an Iowa corn farmer that heard voices from his cornfield saying “if you build it, he will come.” Although scoffed by friends, family and the small town community, Costner plowed-up part of his cornfield and built a baseball diamond on the faith that something wonderful would happen – and it did, but you have to see the movie to find out! Anyway, our “Field of Dreams” approach is to provide the best habitat for birds that we can and we firmly “believe” that birds will come to it and benefit from it. However, without monitoring to measure our success, we will never really know if what we accomplished on the ground actually had a positive benefit for the bird species we were trying to help?

Our 2014 MoBCI Conference theme was designed to help us have a better understanding of how important monitoring is to evaluate our efforts to conserve, restore and protect bird populations. We wanted to ask the question “Are our restoration efforts benefitting bird populations here in Missouri and on a larger scale?” In MoBCI’s Implementation Plan, one of the seven “Visions and Potential Action Initiatives” (No. D.4. in that document) addressed the need for “Monitoring.”



While the visionary bullet points such as needing “dedicated individuals” and “use established methods to resolve conflicts and measure successes” and “use good science to monitor” were good points, the action items that followed reflected a lack of knowledge about how “monitoring” would be accomplished. This lack of decisive actions certainly was not unusual and does not reflect badly on MoBCI’s early planners, because even the best resource agencies and their best professionals across the continent were (some still are) struggling with how to address the monitoring challenge.

Fortunately, over the course of the past decade, since MoBCI’s inception, there have been many organizational developments and scientific advances to help us measure our success. MoBCI is Missouri’s “step down” of the hemispheric and international integrated bird conservation partnership – the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). The NABCI vision is one where “Populations and habitats of North America’s birds are protected, restored, and enhanced through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional, state, and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management.” Like NABCI, MoBCI is about conserving birds across geopolitical boundaries, across taxonomic groups, and across landscapes. MoBCI is a partnership designed for delivery of conservation at the state and local levels. NABCI fosters coordination and collaboration on key issues of concern, including monitoring. The first State of the Birds report (2009) from NABCI presented a new synthesis of major bird-monitoring databases, including data from thousands of citizen scientists and professional biologists. With more than 1,000 species on the most current U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) list of protected migratory birds, we needed such nationwide baseline data to give us a better understanding of what our priorities for habitat/species restoration efforts should be. So, I hope you would agree that “monitoring” is essential to direct our “future” efforts, rather than just a reporting of what has already happened (i.e., something in the past).

There are many sources of additional information related to bird monitoring. For example, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, USGS, lists 21 programs focused on monitoring bird populations in North America (www.pwrc.usgs.gov/birds.html). The web site for the Migratory Bird Program, USFWS, does a good job of identifying the issues and provides information on a number of surveys of national interest, this information can be found at (www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/SurveysMonitoringResearch/mntrtbl.html). Closer to home, the Midwest Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership is committed to informed bird conservation decisions through enhanced coordination and exchange of monitoring information (www.midwestbirdmonitoring.ning.com/). More specific to Missouri, the Central Hardwood Joint Venture (www.chjv.org) has an entire page devoted to monitoring, and the other two joint ventures that include Missouri (Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture and Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture) conduct bird population monitoring programs as well. Audubon’s Important Bird Areas (www.mo.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-5) were designed with monitoring as an important component. State agencies in Missouri, such as the MO Department of Conservation and MO Department of Natural Resources, have many programs, far too numerous to mention here, with staff and funding dedicated to monitoring birds in almost every type of habitat. The World Bird Sanctuary (www.worldbirdsantuary.org) has a key monitoring component to their programs in Missouri and The Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org) monitors bird populations for their projects as well. As another example of Missouri-focused efforts, the original impetus for establishing the Missouri River Bird Observatory (www.mrbo.org) was to conduct long-term monitoring of migratory bird populations, although their efforts have expanded to monitoring other birds and habitat associations as well. As bird and other wildlife-



watchers in Missouri, each of us can contribute information on the status and distribution of bird populations with many levels of accuracy and scale. As an added bonus to existing information, our 2014 MoBCI Conference Agenda is based on presentations from many of these efforts already mentioned above.

Monitoring can be a form of introspection into our MoBCI organization too. So successful is this partnership that MoBCI received a national award in 2008 from the NABCI/Association of Joint Venture Management Boards for our “Outstanding Contributions to Bird Conservation.” MoBCI continues to demonstrate how local/state level bird conservation partnerships can be effective and transform opportunities into on-the-ground accomplishments. Funding for on-the-ground habitat projects for bird species of conservation concern (i.e., rare, threatened, endangered) was a major vision theme of the 2003 MoBCI Implementation Plan. MoBCI grant projects were first funded in 2004, with State Wildlife Grant apportionments coming through the Missouri Department of Conservation; grant funding also included contributions from the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Over the last 11 years, more than \$1.28 million in MoBCI grant funding was leveraged (i.e., matched) by more than \$2.85 million from project partners, resulting in a total of \$4.13 million put toward the establishment or restoration of bird habitats in Missouri. MoBCI has surely helped to “Build It” in Missouri, with “it” being healthy bird habitats! While we might not always know exactly how we have affected populations of our priority bird species on a statewide or regional scale, we do have more than an “assumption” that birds have benefitted in Missouri from our efforts – without a doubt!

Our MoBCI partnership is certainly more than just a “Field of Dreams!” We have many reasons to be proud of what we have accomplished! Other than creating healthy bird habitats, one cannot overlook another very important accomplishment - MoBCI has created a forum for diverse bird interests to know and better appreciate one another, creating an atmosphere and attitude that so much more can be achieved for bird conservation when working as a team. Our annual Conferences can testify to that! To all of MoBCI’s 67 member organizations, I would say “Congratulations and Be Proud” for how much we have accomplished in a relatively short timeframe. Let’s turn our eyes to the future and continue to work hard together to accomplish even more. I am sure Jerry would be proud of what he helped to accomplish, but I am also sure he would want us to get to work and do even more!

MoBCI Loses Key Leader

By David W. Erickson, Treasurer

MoBCI lost a cherished leader and one of its charter organizers on Saturday, July 26, 2014 when Jerry L. Wade succumbed following a several-month-long struggle with cancer. Coincidentally, on the day of Jerry's death friends had organized a tribute in his honor at one of his favorite eateries, the House of Chow, in Columbia. At the event, his favorite music was intermingled with comments from attendees on Jerry's life and contributions. We learned much about Jerry from those who had engaged him in settings that may have been very different from our own. Several individuals made it a point to highlight his contributions to MoBCI. We also learned that in his younger years he had worked as an ironworker, served as a Boone County “Muleskinners” leader, and was an absolute S.O.B., that is a “Spouse of a Birder”. Indeed, Jerry's wife of 49 years (and birder of great renown), Edge, shared her personal in



Jerry Wade

sights as well in the most touching fashion possible. Jerry Wade was well known in Columbia for his long tenure with the University of Missouri-Extension, his years of service on the Columbia Planning and Zoning Commission, and multiple contributions while serving on the Columbia City Council.

MoBCI members knew Jerry Wade for his longstanding role in organizing the logistics of the annual MoBCI Conference and his duties as Treasurer of the MoBCI Foundation which handles MoBCI's finances. Those with longer memories will recall that after initial formation meetings in 2002, Jerry offered to assist MDC with formal facilitation services, and, in 2003, he facilitated charter organization leaders in the development of the "purpose" and "guiding principles" which are the foundation of MoBCI's Bylaws. Jerry Wade molded the individual interest in birds that each of our organization's held into common interest for bird

conservation. MoBCI is now a strong, cohesive entity with a sharpened vision for bird conservation, an effective grants program, and an effective forum for interaction among bird conservation organizations.

Jerry viewed MoBCI as a stellar success, but even while ailing, he penned the initial vision for a Youth Education and Habitat Program in which MoBCI would partner with the Missouri Environmental Education Association (MEEA) to provide funding for projects that use habitat improvement to further environmental education in grades K-12. He fully realized that the future of Missouri's bird habitats depends on the commitment of our youth. His vision was to build an endowed account to fund the effort, and it comes as no surprise that he and his family asked that among other charities, memorials be considered for this purpose through either the Audubon Society of Missouri (ASM) or MoBCI. Significantly, both the Board of ASM and Steering Committee of MoBCI have committed to the fulfillment of Jerry's vision. MoBCI memorials can be sent to MoBCI, 2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122, Columbia, MO 65203.

The Youth Habitat and Education Program: a Habitat Improvement Grant Program for Educators

The Youth Habitat and Education Program is a matching grant program created by MoBCI, the Audubon Society of MO and the Missouri Environmental Education Association. Memorial gifts honoring Jerry Wade and funds from these organizations provide the dollars to support this effort to engage youth and their teachers in habitat improvement to benefit birds. This grant is open to any MEEA member, whether a formal or non-formal educator. Grant awards will be up to \$500 each to purchase materials or supplies to carry out bird habitat conservation projects in Missouri. Eligible activities include projects that protect, enhance or restore bird habitats on any lands in Missouri. All projects should be habitat based and not strictly designed for monitoring. An educational component is mandatory. Awards will be made to the recipient's school or organization. RECEIPT DEADLINE: Sept. 30, 2014. Details and applications forms can be found at www.mobci.org.



The Partnering Organizations of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative!

*Academy of Science of St. Louis
American Bird Conservancy/Central Hardwoods
Joint Venture
Audubon Missouri
Audubon Society of Missouri
Audubon Society, Chariton Valley Chapter
Audubon Society, Columbia Chapter
Audubon Society, Grand River Chapter
Audubon Society, Greater Kansas City Chapter,
Burroughs Audubon Society
Audubon Society, Greater Ozarks Chapter
Audubon Society, Midland Empire Chapter
Audubon Society, River Bluffs Chapter
Audubon Society, St. Louis Chapter
Avian Conservation Alliance
City of Des Peres Parks & Recreation Department
Clay County Dept. of Parks, Recreation
& Historic Sites
Coldwater Outing and Game Preserve
Conservation Federation of Missouri
Ducks Unlimited
Eleven Point River Conservancy
Forest Park Forever
Forrest Keeling Nursery
Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri
Kansas City Wildlands/Bridging The Gap
LaBarque Watershed Stream Team Association
L-A-D Foundation
Litzinger Road Ecology Center
Mark Twain National Forest, USDA Forest Service
Massasauga Flats, LLC
Missouri Army National Guard
Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation
Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Department of Natural Resources,
Division of State Parks
Missouri Department of Transportation
Missouri Falconers Association
Missouri Native Plant Society, Hawthorn Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalists
Missouri Master Naturalist, Boone's Lick Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalist, Hi Lonesome Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalist, Osage Trails Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalist, Springfield Plateau
Chapter*

*Missouri Native Seed Association
Missouri Park and Recreation Association
Missouri Prairie Foundation
Missouri Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation
Grouse Chapter
Missouri River Bird Observatory
National Wild Turkey Federation, MO Chapter
North American Grouse Partnership,
Missouri Chapter
Ozark Center for Wildlife Research
Ozark National Scenic Riverways
Ozark Regional Land Trust, Inc.
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation Inc.
Sierra Club, Ozark Chapter
The Nature Conservancy, Missouri Field Office
University of Missouri-Columbia,
School of Natural Resources
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Great River/
Clarence Cannon National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Mingo National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Missouri Private Lands Office
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Squaw Creek National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Swan Lake National
Fish & Wildlife Refuge
Watershed Institute, Inc and
The Watershed Land Trust
Webster Groves Nature Study Society
Wild Birds for the 21st Century
World Bird Sanctuary*



FY2014 MoBCI Project Summaries

Ruffed Grouse

By Tom Westhoff

Since the inception of MoBCI, the Mo Grouse Chapter of Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation (QUWF) has been receiving funds to complete habitat work on private land in the River Hills area of Callaway, Montgomery, and Warren Counties. Habitat work has been completed on thousands of acres of early successional forest habitat which has created habitat for a host of birds and now may be paying off for the ruffed grouse. The spring and early summer of 2014 has shown an increase in the number of sightings of grouse. The previous years of 2012-13 there were only 2 reports of grouse and this year we have had 8 different sightings of 12 grouse. While there may be more awareness due to increase interest, more sightings are encouraging, and with the good nesting and brood rearing conditions this year, it will be interesting to see if population numbers increase again in 2015. Most of the sightings were in, or adjacent to, areas where habitat work has completed.

The MDC and Mo Grouse Chapter continue to create early successional habitat. Work on Little Lost Creek and Daniel Boone Conservation areas will be starting soon with increase shelterwood timber harvests and forest thinning. Private lands surrounding the two areas will be targeted for additional work. The combination of work on public and private land will create a core area in which we hope to release birds in the future.

Funding for the private land work comes from many sources, but the MOBCI funding over the years has been the major reason we have been able to create this much needed habitat for multiple bird species. We plan to continue creating this habitat and want to thank everyone involved in the MoBCI organization and hope for continued support. In a few years we hope everyone can go to Little Lost Creek or Daniel Boone in the spring and listen to a drumming grouse.





Bird Habitat Restoration at Stilwell Prairie in the Marmaton/Wah'Kon-Tah Conservation Opportunity Area

By Carol Davit



6/20/2014

FY14 MOBCI Grant of \$20,000 to the Missouri Prairie Foundation

Project: Bird Habitat Restoration at Stilwell Prairie in the Marmaton/Wah'Kon-Tah Conservation Opportunity Area

Project Location: The Missouri Prairie Foundation's 376-acre Stilwell Prairie in Vernon County is situated on a ridge-top with views of the Little Osage River Valley to the north and the Marmaton River Valley to the south. It lies within the Marmaton/Wah'Kon-Tah Conservation Opportunity Area and contains two state-imperiled community types tracked by the Missouri Natural Heritage Database: dry-mesic limestone/dolomite and dry-mesic sandstone/shale prairie natural communities, as well as more than 350 plant species, including the federally endangered Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*). A bird survey at Stilwell conducted in June 2012 by an Audubon Society of Missouri volunteer documented the following grassland species: northern bobwhite quail, scissor-tailed flycatcher, eastern kingbird, common yellowthroat, dickcissel, field sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, lark sparrow (two breeding pairs, also two fledglings), and eastern meadowlark. A bird survey by the same volunteers in 2014 documented northern bobwhite, American crow, Bell's vireo, common yellowthroat, yellow-breasted chat, grasshopper sparrow, field sparrow, dickcissel, eastern meadowlark, and red-winged blackbird.

Work Completed with FY14 Grant Funding: The FY14 MoBCI grant allowed the Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF) to restore and conserve more acreage of Stilwell's natural communities, which in turn is assisting in enhancing habitat for prairie and savanna priority birds identified in the Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan for The Osage Plains (Fitzgerald et al. 2010): Henslow's sparrow, greater prairie-chicken, dickcissel, grasshopper sparrow, field sparrow, loggerhead shrike, scissor-tailed flycatcher, Bell's vireo, and northern bobwhite.



Measurable Outcomes of Work:

- 117 acres of high quality prairie canvassed for sericea lespedeza and tall fescue; both invasives were spot sprayed where found;
- Approximately 90 acres were cut by a brush-grinding contractor;
- Trees were hand cut and sprouts treated with herbicide in 600 feet total of three draws (terrain here too steep for brush-grinding contractor's equipment);
- Resprouts and sericea lespedeza in 57-acre block were spot sprayed;
- Eastern half of 88-acre block was burned; northern half of 28-acre block was burned (total of approximately 58 acres);
- Mead's milkweed stems surveyed for in burned area of high quality prairie. While two populations of Mead's are known from other areas of Stilwell, the search during this grant period did not yield any plants. This specific area had not been surveyed since the late 1990s. Consistent with that survey, no Mead's milkweed plants were found;
- Audubon Society of Missouri volunteer surveyed Stilwell for presence of grassland birds.



4/18/2014



6/20/2014

Funds Expended:

The \$20,000 grant was used for the services of a brush/tree-grinding contractor and hand labor for tree removal on steep slopes. This amount was matched with \$23,634.88 of cash from the Missouri Prairie Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to pay for additional labor and contractor services, mileage and equipment expenses, and herbicide costs, and some in-kind volunteer labor.

Benefits to Wildlife and People: Ecologists rank temperate grasslands—which include Missouri's tallgrass prairies—as the **least conserved, most threatened** major terrestrial habitat type on earth. Prairie protection efforts at Stilwell Prairie, therefore, are not only essential to preserving Missouri's natural heritage, but also are significant to national and even global conservation work.

Improved prairie habitat conditions at Stilwell Prairie for declining grassland bird species will benefit the large birding public who will have greater opportunities for wildlife viewing. Habitat for northern bobwhite quail populations is expected to increase with habitat improvements, thereby enhancing quail hunting opportunities in the surrounding area with increased nesting and brood-rearing success of these grassland birds. Biologically diverse prairie is part of Missouri's natural heritage. It is our responsibility to conserve it for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations. Stilwell Prairie, like all properties owned by MPF, is open to all citizens to enjoy.



MoBCI Hardwood Forest Restoration Grant at Swan Lake NWR

By Emily Fuller, Student Conservation Association Intern at Swan Lake



YCC retagging tree for secondary Polaris treatment (Aug. 2014)

The MoBCI project at Swan Lake NWR focuses on a 187 acre region on the wildlife refuge. The project proposes to restore native bottomland hardwood forest in order to protect wildlife whose niches are dependent upon this specific habitat. Bottomland hardwood forests are currently in decline in the state of Missouri and therefore this project is of special interest to Swan Lake NWR and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Efforts to eradicate undesirable shade-tolerant flora and unproductive hardwoods will allow the regeneration of Oak and Hickory tree species, and increase the available niches for the wildlife species of interest; some of which are federally listed species like the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*).

The MoBCI grant was approved in August 2013 and the initial vegetation survey conducted by the MDC Foresters identified the undesirable shade-tolerant trees and unproductive hardwoods. The marked trees were then hacked and squirted with Polaris herbicide in the fall of 2013, and in the summer of 2014. A second survey was conducted to assess the effects of the treatment, and all marked or treated trees that required an additional treatment of Polaris were re-tagged. In addition, biological surveys on native bird and bat species were executed, and photo monitoring of the area continued to provide insight into the effectiveness of the treatment. This upcoming September the secondary application of Polaris through the hack-and-spray method will be applied to additional shade-tolerant trees in the region that were not hacked in the primary application.



We hope that this secondary application will eradicate all undesirable trees and allow for the regeneration of native hardwoods, which in turn provide critical habitat for certain wildlife species. In the following year there will be further observation of the region by way of bird and bat surveys and continued photo logging, in order to measure the effectiveness of the project. But in regard to the current data analysis and observational reports, the MoBCI hardwood regeneration project already shows a significant improvement in bottomland regrowth and has a promising future for restoring and conserving valuable bottomland forest.



Evidence of increased propagation of oak trees (June 2014)



GPS coordinates correlated to an marked, but unhacked tree (July 2014)

A special thanks to the MDC Forestry Division, Friends of Swan Lake NWR, the Missouri Western Student Chapter of Wildlife Society, Student Conservation Association, and MoBCI for helping Swan Lake NWR to accomplish this important restoration project. To date there have been over 600 volunteer hours logged in support of this project; without these generous helpers we wouldn't have been able to accomplish this!



MoBCI Restoration Grant at Don Robinson State Park

By Ronald Colatskie

Missouri State Parks acquired the 843 acre 'Don Robinson' property in March 2012 through the generous donation of the late Mr. Don Robinson. Nestled in the ecologically rich LaBarque Hills northwest Jefferson County, just southwest of St. Louis, the developing park holds a treasure trove of natural features. MO-DNR State Park ecologists have identified priority habitat restoration zones within the park, specifically a 55 acre project zone which will be restored using proceeds from a recently awarded MoBCI grant.

Fourteen distinct natural communities have been identified in the 55 acre project site. Among the more significant are the high quality dry dolomite woodlands and the sandstone communities which encompass the majority of the property. The unique juxtaposition of geological features including the Joachim Dolomite and St. Peter Sandstone support an incredible diversity of sharply contrasting natural communities which in turn provide ample habitat for forest, woodland, shrubland and grassland birds. With the generous support of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative grant, these natural communities will be restored to greatly augment habitat quality for a variety of bird species.

At present park staff have moved forward with a variety of efforts including point count surveys, botanical monitoring efforts, and active ecological restorative efforts including hardwood thinning and cedar removal.





News From Around the State

‘Teenage’ Songbirds Experience High Mortality Due to Many Causes, MU Study Finds

Source: <http://munews.missouri.edu/news-releases/2014/0508-%E2%80%98teenage%E2%80%99-songbirds-experience-high-mortality-due-to-many-causes-mu-study-finds/>

By Nathan Hurst **May 08, 2014**

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Nearly one-third of songbird species across North America are experiencing long-term declines. Scientists have spent years researching potential causes for these population declines, focusing on the birds when they have just hatched as well as when they are adults. Now, researchers from the University of Missouri and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have found that songbirds are vulnerable to environmental dangers particularly when they are juveniles, shortly after they have left their parents’ nests. Frank Thompson, a scientist with the USDA Forest Service and an associate cooperative professor in the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR), worked with several colleagues to find that the majority of juvenile bird deaths occur in the first three weeks after they leave the nest.

“Just like teenagers leaving home to live on their own for the first time, these juvenile birds are inexperienced and vulnerable to the outside world,” said Thompson. “It is important for these young birds to find acceptable habitats and shelter for them to survive on their own. Therefore, it is important for conservationists to find ways to provide the right habitats for these birds to survive during what is an important, yet vulnerable, time in their development.”

Thompson says juvenile birds often seek different types of habitats compared to their parents. He says that juvenile songbirds often prefer denser foliage such as shrub land and young forest, compared to more open, older forests where their parents may have nested.

“It is important for conservation groups and land managers to know exactly what types of habitats need to be provided in order to protect these birds,” Thompson said. “Providing habitats needed by breeding adult birds won’t make much of a difference if those birds don’t survive long enough to reach adulthood because they don’t have adequate shelter when they are young. This approach is part of a growing focus on full-cycle conservation for migrant song birds”

Thompson says many studies have looked into mortality rates for fully grown birds as well as chicks that have just hatched, but not enough work has been done on juvenile birds that have just left the nest and are becoming independent. He recommends further study on this important life stage for songbirds in order to better understand specific causes for high mortality rates.

Thompson’s study was co-authored by W. Andrew Cox, a former post-doctoral fellow in the MU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences in CAFNR, Allison Cox, and John Faaborg, a professor of biological sciences at MU.

The study was published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.



Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace!

John D. Burk



So what on earth can legislation related to the management of captive cervids possibly have in common with bird conservation and why should we care? The calculated move by our legislature to reclassify captive cervids as livestock may seem innocuous and unrelated but let me explain what is actually going on here. To fully understand the issue one must first understand and appreciate our conservation history and that requires a brief explanation of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

In many respects the natural resources that we have and how they are managed in Missouri are the envy of the country. That is partly because our system comes closest to strict adherence to the foundational principles of the aforementioned North American Model. The following are the 7 foundational pillars of the model:

Wildlife is held in the public trust That means it belongs to each of us equally and that no one individual or entity can own it so we each have an equal stake and reason to care about it.

Eliminating commerce in dead wildlife Prior to the adoption of this principle and the federal and state regulations that reined it in, the economic incentive to exploit wildlife was irresistible. Whether it's ivory and horns, exotic feathers, or abnormally large antlers, if the rewards are high enough the risks will be taken.

Democratic rule of law Laws are created through a public process where everyone has an EQUAL opportunity AND responsibility to develop systems of wildlife conservation and use.

Hunting opportunity for all The European model allows for the privatization or ownership of wildlife. Under this system only the government, the wealthy, or royalty have access to wildlife resources. In America, we can ALL hunt.

*“The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.” -
Teddy Roosevelt*



Wildlife may be killed only for legitimate reasons In North America, individuals may legally kill certain wild animals under strict guidelines for food, fur, self-defense, or protection of property. These same laws restrict casual killing of wildlife merely for antlers, horns, or feathers.

Wildlife is an international resource Wildlife species, especially those that migrate long distances, obviously do not recognize or respect political boundaries. Therefore, it was necessary to enact treaties that regulated resource access across political boundaries.

Science is the basis for wildlife policy The regulations that we, as responsible outdoorsmen and women, must abide by are based upon recommendations put forward by highly trained and skilled professionals whose livelihood is solely dependent upon doing what's best for the resource based upon the best available science and vetted through the democratic rule of law outlined under principle 3 above.

In the last legislative session there was a multipronged approach within the legislature to usurp the authority of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC); a direct assault on several of the 7 principles and something that has been repeatedly attempted since this authority was granted by the citizenry 80 years ago. The impetus was a perception by the captive cervid industry that MDC was overreaching their authority to regulate them in an effort to protect wild deer from chronic wasting disease. They contend that, "a government bully is picking on an innocent private sector infant industry just trying to make an honest living". With everything that has transpired over the last 6 years on a national scale, this tactic was more successful than it should have been.

First, SJR42 and its companion bill in the House HJR57 sought to require ALL state promulgated rules to go before the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). Essentially this would have meant that the legislators would get the last word on regulating our forests, fish, and wildlife regardless of what MDC recommended. Luckily MDC was exempted from these bills, so plan "A" failed. That success was largely thanks to conservation groups sending the message loud and clear that this was not acceptable to us.

Next, SJR 29 sought to expand the current conservation commission from 4 to 8 members. The claimed justification was to allow for more equal statewide representation. The current system is designed to consider what is best for the whole state and has worked fine for 80 years. This bill also died but will likely resurface in the next session.

Lastly, HB 1326 and SB 506 sought to change the definition of captive cervids from "wildlife" to "livestock". This would essentially take MDC out of the equation for regulating the threat of CWD because the regulatory authority for livestock is granted to Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA). MDA does not have the manpower or budget to adequately enforce existing regulations, does not want this additional responsibility, and testified in committee against both bills.

Chris Kelly, Representative from the 45th district in Columbia issued the following statement on June 4, 2014 in a letter to the editor describing the tactics and process used in passing the legislation: *"The buck farmers have made massive political contributions and have been able to convince the Republican leadership to prevent any amendments that would remove the captive cervid language from the Agriculture bill, including an amendment that would have*



prevented deer from being shot while drugged. The leadership knew that the majority of Representatives opposed the transfer of deer management. They also knew that if the captive cervid language stayed in the Agriculture bills it would make it difficult for the Governor to veto them. They therefore refused to recognize any Representative, of either party, who offered an amendment to remove the language.” As a result, both bills passed through the house and senate easily, largely because they contained other legislation important to the agricultural industry.

On July 8 the Governor addressed the Conservation Commission at a special session held at the Tiger Hotel in Columbia, where historically and ironically the bill creating the conservation commission and the authority to regulate the state’s fish, forests, and wildlife was granted almost 80 years ago. There the Governor announced his veto of HB 1326 and SB 506 in an eloquent speech that told of our great conservation history and how that the future of conservation in the state hangs in the balance if we don’t act to ensure that his veto stands in the face of a threatened legislative override. The Governor also accurately stated that it is up to each of us as individuals to make sure that our voices are heard. Don’t rely on others to make your noise for you, there is too much at stake to just hope that it all works out. This is an instance where you must pick up the phone or fire up your computer to let your legislators know that we stand with the Governor on this issue.

We have some of the finest natural resources in the country largely as a product of the system that has been put in place for us. This system is being threatened and we need you to act. One thing that has always separated conservation minded folks from other groups is that we tend to put our money and our activity into our passion. This usually equates to outreaching to others, sharing our passion or putting our backs and dollars into building better habitats. What we usually don’t do a lot of is political activism. In this particular situation though, the time has come where we must speak up.

Use the following link to find out who your legislators are and how they can be contacted. Give them a call or e-mail them and let them know that we strongly support our Governor’s veto of the captive cervid reclassification bills and that we want to keep politics out of natural resource management. http://www.senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup/default.aspx/leg_lookup.aspx

Please don’t assume that what we enjoy here in Missouri always was and always will be. We have what we have as a result of a very effective system. A system that politics and politicians have largely been kept out of. These bills and the pending law that they will create will be the first crack in the dam that could alter our conservation future in a very negative way.



Prairie Chickens Released at Dunn Ranch

Bill Graham

Source: April 2014 <http://mdc.mo.gov/newsroom/prairie-chicken-release-bolsters-iconic-native>



"Courtesy Missouri Department of Conservation"

Eagleville, Mo. – Forty-five greater prairie chickens were trapped in Nebraska in recent weeks and released at The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Dunn Range Prairie in northwest Missouri. The release will bolster small flocks of prairie chickens within the Grand River Grasslands, which includes Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Pawnee Prairie. This is the second year of a three-year, bi-state program with Iowa to help an endangered and once-common species rebound in the two states.

The prairie chickens were released on a lek or booming ground where males do a courtship dance for females in spring. Six hens released on April 11 took flight with the ranch's bison herd grazing nearby, a scene reminiscent of pre-settlement times when prairie covered most of north Missouri and prairie chickens numbered almost a million statewide. Habitat losses due to farming and urban sprawl have reduced native grasslands to mere fragments and prairie chickens to only a few hundred birds.

Earlier restoration efforts in nearby Iowa prompted some prairie chickens to return to traditional lek sites At Dunn Ranch and Pawnee Prairie in Harrison County. Biologists were encouraged by the trend and counted as many as 65 birds in the spring of 2008. But harsh winters followed and heightened natural mortality. Extremely rainy and cool nesting seasons also occurred, eliminating nesting success. The spring lek counts dwindled to only a few birds.

Conservation partners in the Grand River Grasslands began a translocation of prairie chickens trapped in Nebraska and released at Dunn Ranch and at public grassland in Iowa to the north. All birds translocated are given leg bands. Hens released in Missouri are also outfitted with small radio telemetry transmitters. Biologists track them through nesting, brood rearing and summer seasons to learn habitat preferences, which can guide future land management.

During one count this spring, TNC staff found 12 prairie chickens on the lek, seven males and five females. No females had radio collars, which could indicate survival of original birds and reproduction success from last spring. Two of the



males had leg bands showing they were released last year, and one male was released two years ago in Iowa.

“I’m hopeful and encouraged by what we’ve seen so far,” said Dave Hoover, MDC wildlife management biologist.

“We’re seeing that we’re getting some survival and some reproduction.”

This spring’s release at Dunn Ranch included 25 males and 20 females. On April 14, Hoover was able to track 14 of the hens on radio and more may have been just beyond range. The tracking will enable biologists to count how many hens nest in the area and possibly to later spot broods. A similar prairie chicken release was done this spring at Iowa public lands north of Dunn Ranch.

The Grand River Grasslands was started to help all prairie species and waterways in a cooperative effort between MDC, TNC, private landowners and conservation agencies in Iowa. This year, MDC is increasing efforts in the area with a Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. Habitat management will be heightened on public lands. But also a focus area for expertise, grant and cost-sharing services will be broadened for private landowners wishing to improve native grassland habitat and stream management.

Prairie chickens are an indicator species for overall grassland health. The birds, considered a grassland grouse, have shown a propensity to travel long distances and intermingle between flocks, Hoover said. Working on a larger scale to restore a functioning grassland ecosystem will help all prairie species. The Grand River Grasslands also offers people a unique and scenic place for people to enjoy nature and the outdoors.

For more information on native prairie plants and creatures, go to mdc.mo.gov. Information on TNC’s Dunn Ranch and the Grand River Grasslands: <http://www.bit.ly/RmQ4Rr>



News From Around the Country

Source: Cornell University Survey Research Institute

Land Trusts Surveyed: Interest in Bird Habitat Conservation and Resources

By Gene Gardner

Input from a local Missouri Land Trust is expected to be helpful in preparing educational materials, services, and programs for land trusts of all types and their efforts to conserve birds and their habitat.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Land Trust Alliance, and Wings Over Western Waters (a consortium of land trusts and bird habitat Joint Ventures) recently partnered on a project to survey Land Trusts in the U.S. to determine their "Interest in Bird Habitat Conservation and Resources." The surveys began on April 15, 2014, and were to be completed by June 3, 2014.

The purpose of their project was simply to learn more about land trust's interest and experience with bird habitat conservation and related resources. Results from the survey are expected to be helpful in preparing educational materials, services, and programs for land trusts of all types.



The Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri, a MoBCI member organization based in Columbia, Missouri, was asked to participate because they work at the local level and they completed the Land Trust Alliance Census in 2010. The Mission of the Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri (GLT) is to conserve the streams, forests, grasslands, and farmlands that represent our distinctive landscape for present and future generations; this mission promotes bird conservation by protecting healthy habitat. GLT helps private landowners protect their lands through conservation easements and donations, they engage the community through volunteer and outreach opportunities to assist in restoring natural areas and native species, they build open space connectivity by linking protected natural areas with parks and public spaces for wildlife and to encourage outdoor recreation, and foster a culture of land conservation, nature appreciation, and nature education by networking members, landowners, agencies, and resources. In 2014, GLT completed the Our Natural Legacy: A Plan for Columbia and Boone County. Based on the power of collaboration, Our Natural Legacy is a green infrastructure plan that charts a course for ensuring the well-being of the environmental, social, and economic environments in Boone County. The full report can be read at <http://www.greenbeltmissouri.org/our-natural-legacy-plan/ONL>.



USDA Pledges \$50 million for Midwest Wetlands

By Mark Hofberg

Source: The Wildlife Society News July 2014 <http://news.wildlife.org/featured/usda-pledges-50-million-for-midwest-wetlands/>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced plans to direct \$50 million from the 2014 farm bill budget to conservation projects affecting the Red River of the North Basin. The funds are on top of a \$35 million pledge that the agency made in February. The USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service will direct the money over five years through conservation programs designed to incentivize landowners to preserve and enhance wetlands through technical and financial assistance.

The 25 million-acre Red River watershed is part of the Prairie Pothole region – Midwestern plains that encompass parts of five states and three Canadian provinces. The region is characterized by shallow depressions that collect water – perfect habitat for waterfowl and migratory birds. In fact, it is estimated that 75 percent of North American waterfowl use these seasonal wetlands – commonly referred to as “America’s duck factory” – for breeding and nesting while nearly half of the continent’s migratory bird species rest and fuel up in the fertile wetlands and grasslands during migrations.



A recent [report](#) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) brought attention to “alarming losses” suffered by the region’s natural areas. Agriculture, oil and gas drilling, and other development activities have led to serious declines in wetland and grassland area, threatening not only the health of the duck population, but also the safety of residents. The Red River floods nearly every year, and the wetlands are vital to soaking up excess flow.

Conservation groups applaud the decision citing both wildlife benefits and flood protection. The region’s waterfowl are essential to economies that rely on sportsmen dollars. The duck stamp program alone brings in an average of \$25 million annually for wetlands acquisition.



Bird Education

Learn about s like never before

A promotional banner for "Bird Song Hero". On the left, a blue bunting is perched on a white, spiky plant, singing. To its right are white musical notes. The background is a teal-to-blue gradient with a hexagonal pattern. On the right side, the text "Bird Song Hero" is displayed in a large, dark font, with "The song learning game for everyone" underneath. Below this is a button that says "Play the game >". At the bottom right is a logo for "BIRD SONG HERO" featuring a bird icon and the text "BIRD SONG HERO" in a stylized font.

Bunting by: Michaela Sagalova

A promotional banner for "All About Feathers". The background is a teal-to-green gradient with a hexagonal pattern. On the left, the text "All About Feathers" is displayed in a large, white font, with "The science & beauty of feathers" underneath. Below this is a button that says "Explore All About Feathers >". On the right side, a large, colorful feather is shown, with a yellow and orange base and a green and red shaft.

A recently developed project from the education program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology aims to connect bird enthusiasts, educators, and students with interactive, multimedia-rich resources about the fascinating lives of birds.

- Bird Song Hero is a bird song ID game using song visuals to learn bird songs. Give it a try!
- All About Feathers explores the science and beauty of feathers.

The resources above were both designed with Cornell's All About Birds online field guide in mind.

For more information: <http://biology.allaboutbirds.org/#home-page-top>