



MOBCI HABITAT NEWS

A Publication of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative

SUMMER, 2010



Dear MoBCI Partners and Friends,

Whether one is walking in the forest watching or listening to a Cerulean Warbler high in the sycamore trees, or watching a Short eared owl patrol the grassland at dusk or walking through the marsh looking for Virginal Rail – one realizes the old saying “Go where the birds are” has relevance. Habitat is critical to the success to the bird’s ability to breed, hunt for food and survive. Restoring a habitat not only benefits the birds, but other wildlife as well!

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI), through its partners and grant programs, works to protect, maintain and restore critical habitat for many bird species and their habitat needs. Last year, the MoBCI Grant program funded through the Missouri Department of Conservation provided \$106,000 for on the ground habitat restoration. More details regarding the Grants are found in this newsletter!

In May, MoBCI with the assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) had the privilege to meet with First Lady, Georganne Wheeler Nixon. At the meeting, Mrs. Nixon spoke with the MoBCI Steering Committee and special guests including the MDC Director Bob Ziehmer. The First Lady represented Governor Jay Nixon in proclaiming May 12 as ‘Bird Conservation Day’! The MoBCI Committee presented to her a framed print of the Cerulean Warbler (the focus bird for this year). The artwork was from Brad Jacob’s book “Birds of Missouri”.

Through this past year, the MoBCI Steering Committee has been involved in meetings, conferences and projects throughout the state. We look forward to sharing our experiences and insights at the MoBCI 2010 Annual Conference. Plus, the conference committee has done an outstanding job in “rounding up” a great group of speakers for the annual conference on August 27 – 29 – theme – **How does climate impact birds and “weather” we can make a difference!**. Looking forward to seeing you at the conference!

Linda C. Tossing



Linda C. Tossing, Chair
MoBCI Steering Committee

The 2010 Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grant Program Confirming Commitment to Bird Conservation Projects in Missouri

We should all be proud that our national award-winning organization of staunch bird conservation enthusiasts continues to demonstrate our strong support for projects that benefit birds and their habitats. During the 2010 grant cycle, funding for eight bird conservation projects were approved by the MoBCI Steering Committee. Including these eight viable projects, MoBCI has now supported more than 75 bird conservation projects in the eight years since the grant program was established (2004). During the past eight years, MoBCI has directed more than \$2.9 million to on-the-ground bird conservation projects; MoBCI has awarded \$1,032,376 in grants, which brought more than \$1.9 million in additional matching funds for these projects from conservation partners. Each year, additional funding and administrative services for MoBCI projects are provided through the Partners in Conservation program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Once again, the 2010 grant cycle (MDC FY2011) was a competitive one, with 12 grant proposals submitted for consideration (\$198,762 in funding requested). The eight successful grantees for 2010 submitted some excellent conceptual projects in Missouri that will benefit birds and other wildlife in grassland/prairie, savanna, woodland, forest, and wetland habitats. Striving to fund the widest variety of projects possible, the MoBCI Grants Subcommittee offered several of the grantees less funding support than they requested; as a tribute to their dedication to bird conservation, these grantees accepted their reduced funding and merely adjusted their project scope to reflect reductions in expenditures. A summary of the projects that were awarded MoBCI grants is provided below.

St. Francois Mountains Glade and Woodland Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$20,000; Matching Funds \$23,000

Partnering Organization(s): Missouri Department of Natural Resources (lead), Ozark Trail Association, U.S. Forest Service, the City of Ironton, Sherwood Forest Camp, and Missouri Department of Conservation

Project partners will focus their glade and woodland restoration activities within the St. Francois Knobs Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); this area was heavily impacted by the May 8, 2009 windstorm (called a derecho). More specifically, actions will occur within the 7,028 acre St. Francois Mountains Natural Area (SFMNA) on lands owned and managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). This area includes portions of Taum Sauk Mountain and Johnson's Shut-Ins State Parks and Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area (CA). Other nearby sites that will receive conservation work includes property owned by the City of Ironton (Shepherd Mountain), Sherwood Forest Camp, and Buford Mountain CA. During 2010-2011, additional AmeriCorps crews and/or appropriate contractors will construct and rehabilitate fire lines (some of which serve a dual purpose as hiking trails, including the Ozark Trail); assist with glade and woodland prescribed burns; and thin woody invasive species (e.g., eastern red cedar) from glades. This project will



benefit important breeding habitat for a number of Partners in Flight priority neotropical migrant songbirds and for resident Partners in Flight priority birds. Vegetation monitoring in pre-and post-prescribed fire and thinning treatment areas and breeding bird surveys of SFMNA and surrounding will be conducted.

Savanna and Open Woodland Habitat Restoration on Cane Ridge Pinery Area

MoBCI Grant \$20,000; Matching Funds \$30,000

Partnering Organization(s): National Wild Turkey Federation (lead), U.S. Forest Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation

This project is located in an ecosystem restoration emphasis area called the Cane Ridge Pinery (approximately 40,300 acres), which is located on the Poplar Bluff Ranger District, Mark Twain National Forest, approximately eight miles east of Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Although 10,000 acres of burning is targeted, this 2,000-acre project focuses on the Wylie King/Dry Branch Unit. The USFS has recognized the Cane Ridge Pinery area as a unique natural area for a number of years and TNC Missouri Chapter identified the Cane Ridge area as a globally significant landscape needing conservation attention. This project will restore a landscape scale block of oak-pine dominated savanna and open woodland conditions via aerial ignition from a helicopter. Management of this 2,000 acre burn unit is expected to increase habitat diversity, and nearly double habitat suitability for bird species that use grass/shrub and open woodlands. Additional habitat for species like worm-eating warblers, Kentucky warblers, eastern wood pewee, and bobwhite quail will also result. This landscape-scale habitat improvement is an example of accomplishing a key objective of the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, to facilitate seamless integration of bobwhite habitat restoration efforts with those for migratory songbirds, and other wildlife.

Indian Camp Creek Park Northern Bobwhite Quail and Early Successional Bird Demonstration Area

MoBCI Grant \$5,000; Matching Funds \$38,000

Partnering Organization(s): St. Charles County Parks and Recreation (lead), AmerenUE, Confluence Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists, Cuivre River Electric Cooperative, and Missouri Department of Conservation

Indian Camp Creek Park is located in northwest St. Charles County, at 2676 Dietrich Rd., Foristell, Missouri, within the Confluence Conservation Opportunity Area. St. Charles County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the country for decades, resulting in ever increasing losses of wildlife habitat. The County Parks Department has far exceeded their minimum goal of maintaining 50% of the lands under their care in a natural state; at Indian Camp Creek Park, 555 acres of the 603 total acres are in natural habitat (>92%). This grant provides funds to create and enhance habitat at Indian Camp Creek Park for northern bobwhite quail as well as other resident and migratory birds. Actions include controlling invasive species, establishing native warm season grasses and wildflowers, creating wildlife watering facilities, establishing annual food plots, developing interpretive signage, and restoring woodland communities. Northern bobwhite quail and many other species of birds and other wildlife will benefit. This project will also serve as a



demonstration of what private landowners and an urban park system can do to help improve wildlife habitat.

River Hills Forest Habitat Project

MoBCI Grant \$10,000; Matching Funds \$20,000

Partnering Organization(s): The Ruffed Grouse Society (lead), Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Society of Missouri, and Missouri Department of Conservation

The River Hills project is located in the Missouri River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area in Central Missouri, which includes Daniel Boone, Danville, Little Lost Creek, and Reform Conservation Areas (CAs), Reifsnider State Forest, and Whetstone Creek Wildlife Management Area. Of these, Daniel Boone and Little Lost Creek CAs have been identified as Important Bird Areas by Audubon Missouri. This grant will be used to continue comprehensive planning efforts that started in 2000 to encourage private landowners through cost share funding and landowner outreach to maintain 10 – 15 % of the project area in a regenerating oak-hickory forest condition. Management that maintains young oak-hickory forest habitat components in Missouri are mostly limited to public land holdings. However, as of September 15, 2009, 74 different cooperating landowners had completed woodland improvement projects on 2,853.2 acres. Through these efforts, private landowners obtain education and funding to help implement important forestry and wildlife habitat activities and become better land stewards. Local birds such as ruffed grouse and northern bobwhite quail benefit, as do migratory songbirds. All wildlife species that require early successional forest or edge habitat as part of their life cycle will also benefit.

Southwest Missouri Remnant Prairies Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$20,000; Matching Funds \$20,800

Partnering Organization(s): Missouri Prairie Foundation (lead), the Audubon Society of Missouri, Missouri Native Plant Society, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and Missouri Department of Conservation

Prairie restoration activities will occur on approximately 2,000 acres of remnant prairies at Prairie View Farm (private), Jerry Smith Park (Kansas City Parks & Recreation), Prairie State Park, and prairies owned by the Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF) and The Nature Conservancy. These prairies occur within the Marmaton/Wah'Kon-Tah, Western Cherokee Grasslands, Cole Camp/Hi Lonesome, and Golden Grasslands Conservation Opportunity Areas and within the Western Cherokee Prairies, Cole Camp Prairies, and Golden Grasslands Important Bird Areas. All of the prairie community types benefited by this project are considered imperiled and vulnerable by MDC. Funds will be used during 2010 to hire contractors and contribute supporting funds necessary to employ MPF's prairie operations manager to control invasive plants (primarily sericea lespedeza) and woody brush growth (e.g., sumac). Pre-and post-prescribed fire and invasive plant treatments will be monitored and bird response to habitat work will be assessed. Grassland birds identified by Partners in Flight as declining across their range will benefit through improved habitat conditions and the public could have increased opportunities for viewing wildlife on these higher quality public and private prairies.



Casaert Habitat Restoration for Wetland Dependent Bird Species

MoBCI Grant \$11,000; Matching Funds \$12,292

Partnering Organization(s): Mr. John R. Casaert (lead), Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (technical lead), and Missouri Department of Conservation

This 22-acre wetland restoration site is located on private land in Cass County, Missouri, within the Scarped Osage Plains Subsection and within the Osage Plains and Ozark Highlands focus area (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service focus area with a goal of 180 acres of wetland restoration and enhancement). The site is surrounded by an intact wooded riparian corridor and is directly adjacent to a permanently protected 87-acre Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and MDC staffs are working with this landowner and have provided a proposed wetland restoration design, which was modified by the USFWS to reduce costs. This grant will provide supporting funds for developing a hydro-geomorphic design that will provide shallow water, seasonally flooded herbaceous wetland vegetation and wet prairie habitat for migratory wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, songbirds and other wildlife. Monitoring is required by the USFWS and will include bird surveys and vegetative response assessment. Eight priority bird species will benefit from this wetland restoration and enhancement in Missouri's Scarped Osage Plains Subsection. Restoration of this site will serve as a demonstration area to other landowners for restoring emergent wetland habitats and native wet prairie for other landowners, increasing public awareness of the importance of natural wetlands for migratory wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds.

Ha Ha Tonka State Park Woodland and Glade Restoration

MoBCI Grant \$15,000; Matching Funds \$17,404

Partnering Organization(s): Missouri Department of Natural Resources (lead), Missouri Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and Missouri Department of Conservation

This project will be completed in three separate areas of Ha Ha Tonka State Park; one 10-acre woodland area currently under fire management, a second woodland (75 acres) currently outside the existing prescribed burn units, and nine (9) acres of glade within the Ha Ha Tonka Oak Woodland Natural Area. The entire park is designated as an Ecological Stewardship Management Area by the Division of State Parks, which is also within the boundaries of the Niangua Basin Conservation Opportunity Area and the Niangua River Watershed Important Bird Area (IBA). Funding will restore 85 acres of woodlands and nine (9) acres of dolomite glade through selective hardwood thinning, cedar removal projects, and the implementation of prescribed fire. DNR staff will assist TNC with conducting pre- and post-treatment vegetation monitoring transects and breeding season (May-July) surveys of birds in the 78-acre unit in 2011 and 2012. Restoration of woodlands and glades identified for this project will result in a larger, more contiguous tract of higher quality habitat for woodland and glade birds of conservation concern, including many priority species listed by Partners in Flight. The prescribed fire program at Ha Ha Tonka State Park will continue to maintain and restore terrestrial natural communities for the sustainability of the park's diverse ecosystems. Also, the 500,000 or so park visitors will be able to view some of the highest quality landscapes of native plants and animals found anywhere in Missouri.



Grassland Bird Recovery in Cole Camp

MoBCI Grant \$5,000; Matching Funds \$29,500

Partnering Organization(s): Audubon Missouri (lead), National Wild Turkey Federation, Hi Lonesome Master Naturalists Chapter, City of Cole Camp, Toyota's TogetherGreen Program, and Missouri Department of Conservation

The Cole Camp Prairies Project, initiated in 2007, is within the Cole Camp/Hi Lonesome Conservation Opportunity Area and the Cole Camp Important Bird Area. Less than 100 individuals of the state endangered greater prairie-chicken (GPC) remain statewide, most in profoundly isolated populations. This funding will be used to improve habitat for GPCs and other grassland obligate species within the project area by providing cost share incentives to private landowners to establish or maintain a healthy grassland ecosystem, using the successful model implemented already. The Cole Camp Prairies Plan addresses the importance of encouraging landowners to make more informed land management decisions for grassland species through ongoing dialogue, workshops, training, and demonstration areas. Another objective is to respond to community interests by maintaining an active partnership with the City of Cole Camp, which could benefit their local economy. With matching funds from Toyota's TogetherGreen Innovative Grant and TogetherGreen Fellows Grant (already secured by Audubon Missouri), staff within the geography will implement additional landowner outreach efforts. Species of conservation concern and vegetation structure will be monitored by Missouri Master Naturalist volunteers (recruited specifically for this project under Audubon leadership) to help estimate the impacts of landscape scale grassland restoration efforts.

Gene Gardner

MoBCI Steering Committee Secretary (2010-2012)

Celebrating 10 Years of State Wildlife Grant Funding



This year marks the 10th Anniversary of State Wildlife Grants Program – a national funding source created to prevent species from becoming endangered by protecting and restoring native habitats. Missouri has received more than \$12.4 million over the past 10 years (averaging about \$1.2 million annually) to help ensure that Missouri has healthy, sustainable plant and animal communities for future generations to use and enjoy. Part of this vision is to have fish, forest and wildlife resources in appreciably better condition tomorrow than they are today. That is why projects and other conservation actions are developed through citizens, government agencies and



WORKING TOGETHER TO CONSERVE AND RESTORE BIRD POPULATIONS AND THEIR HABITATS



non-governmental organizations working together to protect, sustain, enhance, restore or create sustainable plant and animal communities of local, state and national significance.

MoBCI partner organizations have greatly benefitted from State Wildlife Grants – **this federal funding source has made the MoBCI Grants program possible each year since 2003.** In the past six years, State Wildlife Grant funding has allowed more than \$600,000 to be available for MoBCI grants which has been matched with over \$1.2 million in partner funds! This investment has made thousands of acres of bird habitat work possible on public and private lands throughout Missouri (see article on page 2 for descriptions of the most recently funded MoBCI grant projects).

The State Wildlife Grants Program also makes the Department of Conservation's Wildlife



Diversity Fund possible. This significant funding source is made available to Missouri Department of Conservation employees and partners to accomplish native habitat restoration and research and inventory needs for species of conservation concern on public and private land. Over the past decade, tens of thousands of acres have been affected by conservation practices such as clearing unwanted trees and brush from native prairie, replanting native species, and applying prescribed fire to stimulate natural communities. Practically every habitat type has benefited by projects made possible by State Wildlife Grants, including wetlands, rivers, forests, woodlands, savannas, glades, prairies and caves.

Teaming With Wildlife Week (September 4th – 12th) is an opportunity to highlight the State Wildlife Grants Program and Missouri's Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy. We are planning several activities for Teaming With Wildlife Week. One is a series of congressional tours to State Wildlife Grant funded sites to share the importance of this annually appropriated funding source with our congressional leaders. See story on page 8 for an update on our first field tour – a chance to take staff from Congressman Graves' office to visit the Smithville Lake Grassland Revitalization Project.

The State Wildlife Grants Program is a major accomplishment of the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition – a network of over 6,000 organizations and businesses nationally (275 in Missouri) that support additional funding for fish, forest and wildlife conservation. Because it is an annually appropriated funding source, the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition must speak up each year to ensure its inclusion in the Department of Interior's budget. Your organization or business can help support State Wildlife Grant funding (and other potential funding sources), by joining the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition. It's free and easy to join. Simply fill out the brief form at www.teaming.com/action or contact Amy Buechler (800-575-2322, abuechler@confedmo.org). Stay tuned for more Teaming With Wildlife Week updates at www.confedmo.org/teaming.

*Amy Buechler, Conservation Federation of Missouri
MoBCI Steering Committee*



Missouri's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition Hosts Smithville Lake Grassland Field Tour with Congressman Graves' Staff

On a sunny day in late June, the Missouri Teaming With Wildlife Coalition had an opportunity to host Shawna Searcy, Congressman Graves' Liberty, MO Field Representative, on a field tour of the Smithville Lake Grassland Revitalization Project. Smithville Lake is a 7,000 acre Corps of Engineers reservoir 25 miles north of Kansas City. Much of the land surrounding the lake is leased by the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites for trails, recreation and open space.



Since 2005, the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites has worked with partners on the Smithville Grassland Revitalization Project. This project is designed to restore and recreate nearly 2,300 acres of savannas and warm season grasslands around Smithville Lake and focuses on four goals: 1) To recreate a grassland plant/wildlife community from pastureland and cropland; 2) To recreate a savanna, dry plant/wildlife community from degraded savanna areas; 3) To improve habitat for concerned wildlife species; and 4) To create a positive public outlook on conservation awareness of critical terrestrial plant communities, threatened/endangered wildlife species, and wildlife management practices.

Thanks to strong partner contributions (the Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clay County Department of Parks and Recreation, Missouri Prairie Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Burroughs Audubon Society have all contributed dollars and/or volunteer hours to this project), much has been accomplished to date. Nearly 200 acres of native warm season grasslands have been established, over 600 acres of prescribed fire management applied, 700 acres of herbicide application for native warm season grass establishment or invasive species control, hundreds of undesirable trees removed and over 200 acres managed through mowing.

State Wildlife Grants made a large part of this work possible through the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites applying for and receiving MoBCI Grant funding. We were pleased to showcase this project to Shawna and have her share this success story of a project in the 6th District with Congressman Graves. Congressman Graves has been largely supportive of State Wildlife Grant funding, but did not sign on to the "Dear Colleague" letter in support of State Wildlife Grants this year. We hope to have him back on the letter next spring!





Large signs greet visitors to Smithville Lake, showcasing this project and MoBCI as a key partner. (photo: Gene Gardner)

The Missouri Teaming With Wildlife Coalition plans to host more congressional field tours this August and September to help celebrate 10 years of State Wildlife Grants funding. For more information, visit www.confedmo.org/teaming.

*Amy Buechler,
Conservation Federation of Missouri
MoBCI Steering Committee*

MoBCI Partners with NAWCA to Restore Bottomland Forests in the Mingo Basin

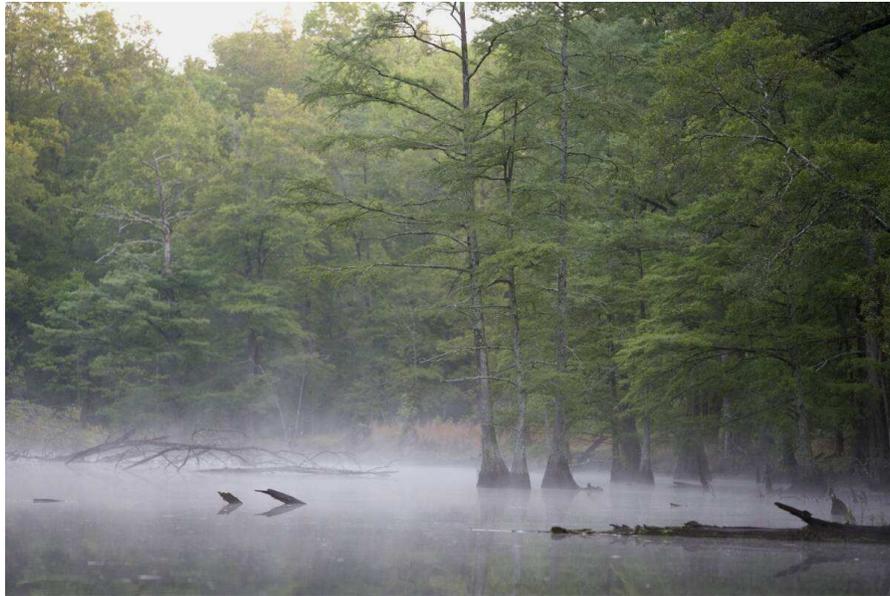
The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), enacted in 1989, protects and restores wetlands for wetland associated fish and wildlife while producing a variety of environmental and economic benefits for citizens. Wetlands help alleviate floodwater peaks, plus they store water and recharge aquifers, thus securing future water supplies. Wetlands play a significant role in improving water quality by removing silt and high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, and removing contaminants before entering the groundwater supply. Wetlands are among the most productive habitats for fish and wildlife populations.

NAWCA is an incentive based program that is driven by partnerships involving federal, state and local governments; nonprofit organizations and community groups. Every federal dollar provided by NAWCA must be matched by at least one dollar from non-federal sources. By the time a project is implemented, NAWCA funds are often tripled or quadrupled on the local level.

In Missouri, more than \$14.7 million dollars of NAWCA grants have stimulated partner contributions of over \$80.4 million dollars since 1990. A total of 20 projects have either been completed or are underway, and have secured or affected over 86,000 acres of wildlife habitat. Examples of public areas where NAWCA funds have been used for acquisition or restoration include Ten Mile Pond, Eagle Bluffs, Coon Island, Four Rivers, Otter Slough, Perry, Settles Ford, Nodaway Valley, B.K. Leach, Fountain Grove, and Montrose CAs. Most Missouri citizens are within a fairly short drive of a public wetland that used NAWCA funding for acquisition or development, and many of these areas would not exist without the necessary partnerships that secured the grant.



MoBCI recently committed \$500 along with several other partners, including MoBCI affiliates such as The Audubon Society of Missouri, and The Conservation Federation of Missouri, to a proposal led by Ducks Unlimited for wetland restoration work in the Mingo Basin, a designated Important Bird Area in Missouri. The Mingo Basin contains about 28,000 acres of historic floodplain of the Mississippi River in southeast Missouri. Most of the floodable lands in the basin are within the 21,592-acre Mingo National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the adjacent state owned 6,234-acre Duck Creek Conservation Area (CA). These two areas contain the largest contiguous block of bottomland hardwood forest (BLH) in Missouri; 17,000 acres out of what was once 2.4 million acres in southeast Missouri. More than 95% of the BLH forest that once existed in southeast Missouri has been destroyed. MoBCI can be proud that it has contributed to an area important for numerous bird species and can also be proud that Missouri has a proven track record in securing habitats and restoring them for the benefit of migratory birds.



Mingo Swamp, Mingo National Wildlife Refuge

Unfortunately, the remaining bottomland forests are in decline due to a number of reasons, but mostly because the natural hydrology has been greatly altered due to the construction of roads, bridges, ditches and levees, etc. The existing system has been exposed to frequent and prolonged flooding resulting in trees dying and species composition changing to a more water tolerant vegetative community with a higher proportion of species such as maple and fewer mast producers, such as red oak. The intent of this proposal is to reverse this trend and to restore, to the degree practical, natural water flow patterns (including sheet flow) and drainage regimes throughout the Mingo Basin, and a healthy bottomland hardwood forest system. The project will also provide improved water management capability on shallow water seasonal wetlands on Mingo NWR.

If approved, the overall result should be better habitat conditions and food resources for a number of wildlife species, including many of the 279 bird species that use habitats in the Mingo Basin.



For example, improved tree regeneration and development of understory vegetation will benefit forest interior bird species and an improved forage base in seasonal wetlands will benefit waterfowl and shorebirds. The projected work will also benefit other fish and wildlife species that are dependent upon wetland ecosystems.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Bird Habitat Conservation is responsible for facilitating the NAWCA Grant Program. Once a slate of eligible proposals has been determined, the proposals are further reviewed and ranked by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, a nine-member council established by the Act. The Council then recommends projects to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, a seven-member commission authorized by the Act to give final funding approval. The status of the Mingo Basin proposal should be announced by September.



Mingo National Wildlife Refuge

*David Graber, Ducks Unlimited
MoBCI Steering Committee*



MoBCI Funding Enables Landscape Level Project in Southeast Missouri



The Cane Ridge Pinery Area (CRPA) is located in the Poplar Bluff Ranger District of the Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF) and includes portions of Butler, Carter, and Wayne Counties, between the communities of Williamsville to the north, Ellsinore to the west, and Poplar Bluff to the southeast. The CRPA landscape is an ecosystem restoration emphasis area, totaling approximately 40,300 acres. The MTNF comprises approximately 24,050 acres of this total with the remaining

16,270 acres in private ownership. A substantial portion of the project area (16,000 acres) also constitutes the Cane Ridge walk-In Turkey Hunting Area.

The Forest Service has recognized the CRPA as a unique natural area for a number of years and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has collaborated on projects in this area in the past. In addition, the Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been working to define globally significant landscapes throughout the United States through a series of eco-regional assessments. These eco-regional assessments are based on data collected primarily by state Natural Heritage Programs. Based on data collected during these assessments, the Missouri Chapter of TNC identified the CRPA as a globally significant landscape needing conservation attention.

What makes the CRPA unique is that it is one of the most feasible areas, based on land ownership, land type association, existing vegetation, and projected land management goals, to restore a large, pine/oak open woodland complex historically representative of the region. Open woodlands and savannas, for descriptive purposes, can be defined as well spaced trees with a grassy forest floor, and a prairie with scattered trees, respectively. These habitat types transition from more open savannas, to open woodlands, to closed woodlands in association with soil type, aspect, and frequency of disturbance. Early succession habitats that include grasses, forbs, and shrubs are a critical component of the life requirements of many bird species. Throughout much of southern Missouri, and especially in this region of southeast Missouri, these open herbaceous habitat types have been replaced by closed canopied systems through reduced harvest and fire suppression. As a result, bird population densities, including wild turkey, that depend upon the herbaceous component to support increased reproductive success, have declined.

In many cases when we think about managing for birds that prefer grasses, forbs, and shrubs we focus our attention on the management of grasslands. For many grass and grass/shrub bird species, high density populations are the result of extensive, high quality nesting and brood rearing habitat and that can be defined simply as knee high herbaceous vegetation. However, in many cases, including the wild turkey, the structure of the vegetation is much more important than the composition. In other words, native grasses and forbs that are not too dense will provide this critically important habitat component regardless if it's an open field or a frequently burned open woodland or savanna.

The creation and maintenance of an open woodland/savanna landscape from a closed woodland condition requires timber harvest and timber stand improvement (TSI). The difference between



harvest and TSI is that harvest involves thinning that generates income while TSI involves thinning of overstocked trees that have no commercial value. A forestry term used to describe the volume of timber on an area is called basal area or BA and the typical volume measurement of an unmanaged Missouri forest would be between 110 and 130 BA. Usually, when BA exceeds much past 80, the canopy is closed and the forest floor has little herbaceous cover. A managed forest contains a mosaic ranging from forest to savanna, providing a diversity of vegetative communities and their associated bird life.

Timber harvest is important in forest management and critical to the creation of early successional habitats for a large suite of birds, so too, is the judicious use of prescribed fire. Initially, when the canopy is opened up, there will be a flush of grasses, forbs, and woody sprouts that immediately respond to increased sun exposure. However, depending upon soil type and aspect, the site can be rapidly overcome by woody sprouts and if fire, mechanical, or chemical treatments are not adequately applied, the herbaceous composition of the site can be short lived. In order to maintain adequate fire frequency on large landscapes like the CRPA as well as managing safety and economic concerns, the incorporation of landscape burns using helicopters is often preferred. Fire behavior based upon terrain, fuel loads, and firing techniques will result in variations in vegetative response post-burn, increasing diversity of composition, cover, and associated wildlife.

The restoration of the CRPA is a long term, high priority for the MTNF that will involve timber harvest, TSI, and landscape scale prescribed burns. Historically, this area was a popular turkey hunting destination but turkey populations have declined since the mid 1980's. The plan for the CRPA should improve turkey population carrying capacity as well as many other grass, grass/shrub related bird species.

In 2009, the NWTf state board approved a \$5,000 super fund grant to the USFS to provide matching dollars for conducting understory removal in a portion of the CRPA. This year, the board approved a second \$5,000 grant that will be used to assist in understory removal and to enhance landscape level burning capabilities in the area. This super fund grant was used as match along with USFS dollars and an additional \$20,000 was awarded by the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) to expand the project. Over 30% of the CRPA was burned this spring using landscape scale burns that varied in size from around 200 acres to over 4,700 acres.

Further project expansion is being pursued in the form of a stewardship contract with negotiations underway. Stewardship contracting is a "goods for services" arrangement that permits the NWTf (or other NGO) to manage a project area within the national forest. The proposed project within the CRPA would involve 2, 250 acre timber sales where the NWTf would bid the sale of the timber thinning and removal of the understory and use the receipts to expand and recondition existing wildlife openings, control invasive vegetation, and reclaim wildlife ponds within the project area. This project represents the beginning of what will hopefully be an expanding long term, productive relationship for the NWTf, USFS, Missouri Department of Conservation, and other partners with the wildlife populations of the CRPA being the ultimate benefactors.

*Submitted by John Burk, National Wild Turkey Federation
MoBCI Steering Committee*





Understory removal in savanna area (above) and open woodland area (below).
Photos courtesy of Bill Paxton.



Helicopter used to improve efficiency of landscape scale burns (photo USFS).



Aerial ignition of landscape burn (photo courtesy of USFS)



Secretary Salazar Unveils Special Edition Duck Stamp Cachet Public Support Gulf Wildlife Refuges in the wake of the Gulf Oil Spill!!

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today unveiled a special edition Federal Duck Stamp envelope, or cachet, that hunters, stamp collectors and other conservationists can purchase for \$25 -- or \$10 more than the cost of a regular Duck Stamp -- to help conservation efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. The funds will be used to acquire wetlands for inclusion in national wildlife refuges along the Gulf Coast.



“When the Dust Bowl of the 1930s destroyed many wetlands, our nation’s sportsmen lobbied Congress to support the creation of the Duck Stamp for wetland acquisition and conservation,” Salazar said. “Today, the wildlife of the Gulf Coast faces new threats – from the current oil spill to disappearing wetlands – that we must rise to

confront. This special edition duck stamp cachet will provide hunters and other conservationists the opportunity to once again go beyond the call of duty by conserving disappearing wetlands for generations to come.”

“Duck stamps have been a conservation tradition since 1934,” said Acting Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Rowan Gould. “Waterfowl hunters, stamp collectors, and wildlife supporters have been the mainstay of that tradition, but we need to expand that community to address broad-scale challenges such as the disappearance of wetlands, accelerated climate change, and other 21st century resource threats.” The cachet features a silk rendering of an award-winning photograph of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Florida by David Moynahan and the 2010-2011 Federal Duck Stamp, which depicts an American wigeon painted by artist Robert Bealle of Waldorf, MD.

All migratory bird hunters must buy a \$15 Federal Duck Stamp (Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp), each year in addition to state licenses, stamps and permits. The design of the stamp is determined by an annual art competition, and the stamps have become popular with stamp collectors and wildlife art enthusiasts as well as those who simply want to contribute to wetland conservation. Since 1934, Federal Duck Stamp sales have raised more than \$750 million to acquire and protect more than 5.3 million acres of wetlands, including habitat on hundreds of the 552 National Wildlife Refuges spread across all 50 states and U.S. territories. The public can purchase the special edition Federal Duck Stamp cachet from Amplex Corporation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s distributor, by dialing 1-800-852-4897 or at www.duckstamp.com. Bass Pro Shops is underwriting the first edition of the cachet and will market the cachet in its retail stores across America and Canada. (Reprinted from the DOI website: www.doi.gov)

Things Your Parents Probably Never Told You About the “Birds and the Bees”

Pollinators, or birds and bees, bats, butterflies, beetles and moths, play a very important role in our day to day lives. Over 90% of all flowering plants and over three-fourths of the crops that feed humans rely on animal pollinators. Pollinators are so important to the reproduction of many plants that provide food and shelter to other organisms that without them whole ecosystems would collapse. Recent steep declines in some pollinator species have prompted scientists and resource managers to form the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign to promote the health of resident and migratory pollinators.



Figure 1 Common Buckeye butterfly on Rattlesnake-master *USFWS Photo*

Do you remember chasing after butterflies scurrying across a field to see where they'd land? How about running and jumping on warm summer nights trying to catch fireflies flickering on and off? Do you remember patiently watching an inch worm scoot along your outstretched fingers? All of these species are pollinators who not only provide personal enjoyment but are critical to the food web of ecological systems.

The question of how can we conserve what we may have lost sight of when we were young can be answered with a little pause and reflection. We need to reinvigorate that child within us, and those around us, to be compelled, not repelled by the world of bugs, bees, birds and bats. Do you know that Hawaiian honeycreepers co-evolved with the plants and moth pollinators on which they feed? How about the fact that there are three endangered bats that feed on the nectar of the Agave plant in Mexico and summer in New Mexico? Are you aware of the 23 federally-listed species of butterflies and skippers that are declining because their host plant populations are declining? Even in Missouri, the threatened Mead's milkweed has declined due to the scarcity of pollinators. Simply put, without pollinators in this world we would not have any of the fruits or vegetables that depend on pollination.



Figure 2 Tube-lipped nectar bat from Ecuador
www.bio.miami.edu/muchhala/home.html

How Can YOU help?

- Plant native plants which are native to your region
- Plant a variety of colors for both spring and summer pollinators
- Arrange plants in clumps rather than single plants to help them find flowers more easily



- Reduce the amount of pesticides you use around the home and farm and use those targeted for specific pests. Spray only when pollinators are not in the garden such as at night or when flowers are not in bloom
- If you have land, consider restoring a portion of it for the “birds and the bees” there are numerous state and federal programs that can help you get started and help you pay for it (contact a MoBCI Steering Committee Member)!
- Take a young person out into the yard and introduce them to the world of pollinators
- Participate in planning for community parks, golf courses, gardens, and school yards to encourage a reduction in the use of pesticides

*Kelly Srigley Werner, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
MoBCI Steering Committee*

**A Special Welcome to the
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation Inc.
the 57th MoBCI Member Organization**

Contributors to the MoBCI Habitat News include:

Linda Tossing, St. Louis Chapter of the Audubon Society
Kelly Srigley Werner, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Gene Gardner, Missouri Department of Conservation
Mike Currier, Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Amy Buechler, Conservation Federation of Missouri
David Graber, Ducks Unlimited
John Burk, National Wild Turkey Federation

Please add to this list by submitting articles on your bird habitat restoration projects to Mike.Currier@dnr.mo.gov and they will be posted on the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative’s website – www.mobci.org.





Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grant Program

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) is currently accepting proposals from private and public organizations or individuals who have partnerships that 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, however monitoring can be a component of the project and is recommended.

Individual grant awards are available up to \$20,000. MoBCI grants require a one to one match of funds that do not originate from the Missouri Department of Conservation. Funds may be spent over a two-year period. All grant proposals must be received by 5:00 pm September 30, 2010.

MoBCI is a voluntary partnership of 57 organizations and agencies with an interest in the conservation of all wild bird species.

For more information about MoBCI and the MoBCI grant program, visit www.mobci.org or contact Gene Gardner (573-751-4115, gene.gardner@mdc.mo.gov).

*Check the **MoBCI.org** website for more information on the Missouri Bird Conservation Grant Program and to see examples of past grant proposals that were funded.*

